

3 1761 06353735 1

١٣






Presented to the
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
LIBRARY

by the
ONTARIO LEGISLATIVE
LIBRARY

1980



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2010 with funding from
University of Toronto

THE GREAT WORLD WAR



FROM A PHOTOGRAPH

BY PACH BROS. NEW YORK

*Dr. Woodrow Wilson
President of the United States*

47937



THE GREAT WORLD WAR

A HISTORY

S.B.
2

General Editor:

FRANK A. MUMBY F.R.Hist.S.

Contributors:

THE EDITOR : DAVID HANNAY
C. GRAHAME-WHITE : HARRY HARPER
EDWIN SHARPE GREW & OTHERS

47937

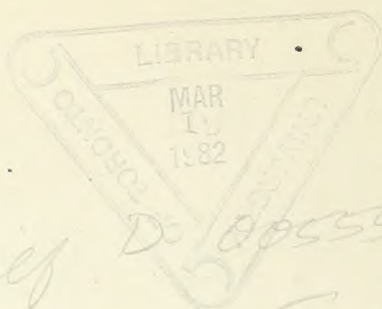


VOLUME VII

THE GRESHAM PUBLISHING COMPANY LTD
66 CHANDOS STREET COVENT GARDEN LONDON

1919





NOTE

The chapters or sections are initialled by the several contributors, namely:—

F. A. M.	Frank A. Mumby.
E. S. G.	Edwin Sharpe Grew.
D. H.	David Hannay.

(Vol. VII)

CONTENTS

VOLUME VII

CHAPTER	Page
I. THE EVE OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION (September, 1916-March, 1917) -	1
II. THE FALL OF TSARDOM IN RUSSIA (March, 1917) - - - - -	10
III. THE ENTRY OF AMERICA (April, 1917) - - - - -	23
IV. WITH MAUDE TO BAGDAD (August, 1916-March, 1917) - - - - -	41
V. THE ALLIES' OPENING OFFENSIVE OF 1917 ON THE WESTERN FRONT -	60
VI. GENERAL NIVELLE'S OFFENSIVE--THE BATTLE OF CRAONNE (April, 1917) -	79
VII. MINOR NAVAL OPERATIONS (June, 1916-December, 1917) - - - - -	68
VIII. THE MORONVILLIERS BATTLE (April-May, 1917) - - - - -	113
IX. BRITISH BATTLES ON THE HINDENBURG LINE (April-May, 1917) - - -	123
X. ITALY'S DOUBLE OFFENSIVE (May-September, 1917) - - - - -	139
XI. THE LAST RUSSIAN EFFORT IN 1917 - - - - -	150
XII. THE BATTLE OF MESSINES (June, 1917) - - - - -	173
XIII. WIDENING THE YPRES SALIENT (July-August, 1917) - - - - -	184
XIV. THE THIRD YEAR OF THE WAR (August, 1916-August, 1917) - - -	211
XV. THE FRENCH FRONT IN THE LATTER HALF OF 1917 - - - - -	225
XVI. FROM LANGEMARCK TO PASSCHENDAELE (September-November, 1917) -	239
XVII. THE FIRST BATTLES OF CAMBRAI (November-December, 1917) - -	297
XVIII. THE COLLAPSE OF RUSSIA (August, 1917-February, 1918) - - -	287
XIX. FIGHTING THE TURKS IN SINAI AND PALESTINE (May, 1916-June, 1917) -	307



LIST OF PLATES

VOLUME VII

PHOTOGRAVURES

DR. WOODROW WILSON, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES	- -	<i>Frontispiece</i>
LIEUT.-GENERAL SIR STANLEY MAUDE, K.C.B., COMMANDING-IN-CHIEF MESOPOTAMIAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE	- - - - -	<i>Facing p. 120</i>
GENERAL SIR HERBERT PLUMER, G.C.B.	- - - - -	232

COLOURED MAPS

GERMAN AND AUSTRIAN FRONTIERS WITH RUSSIA	- - - - -	<i>Facing p. 8</i>
MAP TO ILLUSTRATE THE BATTLE OF MESSINES (June, 1917)	- - -	176
MAP ILLUSTRATING THE BREST-LITOVSK TREATIES	- - - - -	304

THE NAVAL SIDE OF THE WAR

With the coming of Peace it is permissible to deal with certain aspects of the war which, owing to the Censorship, have hitherto been kept secret. This applies more particularly to the naval side of the war, to which, up to the present, it has been impossible to do full justice in the course of our History. In the concluding volume, however, due regard will be paid to the part played by the navy in all the long years of the war, from the battle of Jutland to the final surrender of the German fleet. These concluding chapters, like the earlier contributions on the war at sea, will be written by Mr. David Hannay, and will lose nothing of their historical value from being written in the light of all the information which the naval authorities are now publishing for the first time.

THE GREAT WORLD WAR

VOLUME VII

CHAPTER I

THE EVE OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

(September, 1916—March, 1917)

A Comparison between 1915-1917—Shortage of Ammunition—Break-down of Transport—Dulling of Enthusiasm for the War—The German Court Party—The Socialist Intentions—Winter Operations—Numbers and Quality of New Russian Armies—Roumania and Russian Help—Reasons of Failure—The Russo-Roumanian Link—The Sereth Positions—Russian Rearguard Actions—Retreat from the Dobrudja—Actions in Front of the Sereth Line—Give-and-take Fighting in 1917.

IN the events on that Eastern front which was the grave of so many hopes, and the birthplace of such far-reaching disaster, there was a tragic similarity in the first half of the year 1915 and the end of 1916. In both years the presage of success led up to failure that became explicable only long after. In 1915 the Russian armies had gained the crests of the Carpathians, and seemed on the verge of a descent into the plains of Hungary when they were driven back staggering in a retreat which cost them all their gains, and left Warsaw and the line of the Vistula in the hands of their conquerors. In 1916 General Brussiloff had blown a breach through the Austro-Hungarian lines in Galicia, had captured prisoners by the hundred thousand, and seemed

to have Lemberg once again in his grasp. Then suddenly the impetus of the steam-roller (that tragi-comic symbol!) faltered and ceased altogether, and was followed by the reverse in Roumania, which Russia was powerless to avert, though the Roumanian adventure was planned in conjunction with the Russian operations. The causes of the beginning of the failures were identical in kind though differing in degree. The Russian victories in 1915 were prodigal of men, but they were even more prodigal of the scanty resources of ammunition, so that in April and May, 1916, Russian regiments were fighting the enemy with their fists. The ammunition had been used up, and the criminal incompetents of the Ministry of War could not be

roused into making the shortage good. In the intervening year, what Russia could not do for herself, the Allies did for her. Guns and ammunition were poured into the country from west and from east; the Siberian railway was double-tracked; the railway transport to Petrograd—the Murman line, and the route from Archangel—was amplified and improved. But these extraneous aids spent themselves in bureaucratic inefficiency and corruption. The arms and the munitions reached the threshold of Russia, and while a proportion arrived regularly at the bases, only a fraction trickled slowly to the front. The constant, steady stream was never there, and when the cistern which had been laboriously filled had been emptied by Brussiloff's draught on it, the necessity arose to wait till it had once more reached a workable level.

Ultimately the failures were traceable to the hopelessness of the service of transport. The Siberian railway was choked with munitions during the late autumn of 1916 and the winter of 1916-17; quantities of supplies of other kinds lay spoiling at the Swedish frontier; and the train service throughout Russia, south of Petrograd, was of incredible slowness and dislocation. A British official, whose passage from Petrograd to Bucharest (not then fallen) was speeded by the Embassy, took over five days on the journey, and found himself and his fellow passengers often turned out for eight hours at a time while the locomotive waited for no discoverable reason in the snowy landscape. Regiments bound for the front often walked the major part of the

distance. Nobody was responsible; nobody seemed to care. There were two things which struck this official above others: the first, that few people seemed any longer to be interested in the war; the thing which occupied their minds was the coming Revolution and the chances of it.

The second thing which was always thrust on his attention was that it was impossible to get anything done without bribing someone, and that everyone was to be bribed. Progress was slow even with bribery to grease the wheels, and nowhere was this more evident than on the railways. There were many contributory causes. The railways were themselves becoming worn out, so that when the Tsar's imperial train was returning to Petrograd it had to be sent by a circuitous route, because the main line had been shaken by heavy transport. It was due in a much greater degree to the use of the railways for improper purposes by those who were strong enough, or who would pay enough, to defy the regulations. Thus ammunition was held up on one of the lines because a Court official with a monopoly of some table water always secured precedence for the carriage of his goods; and whereas it was forbidden to transport food from one province to another, the banks and other speculators in flour and sugar could obtain railway cars by "buying" them; that is to say, by bribing a railway official, thereby reducing the already insufficient supply of rolling stock.

The soldiers at the front complained that they were underfed; the reserve troops in the towns became no better

off as transport became more and more clogged; and though Russia counts her herds of cattle by the million, and was one of the world's wheat exporters before the war, meat and bread grew scarcer and scarcer among the civilian population. Officers at the front used the railway to send back flour and sugar to their families, so that the railways were engaged in the simultaneous operations of carrying food to the front and taking it back again to the rear. Many of these hardships were not the result of iniquity, but the outcome of a want of system. They fomented the growing discontent, and blew into a glow the smouldering ashes of the revolutionary spirit which had blazed up in 1905, but had seemed to be extinguished in the enthusiasm with which Russia at first joined with the Tsar in making war.

The disasters of 1915 had also left their mark on the Russian army. Naturally many of the best and bravest had fallen; the fighting enthusiasm had been dulled; and, still more to the point, the vast numbers of recruits which Russia still called to arms, could not make up by quantity what was lacking in military discipline and ability. There had been a shortage of officers when the war began; the new armies of Russia were under-officered, as they had previously been under-gunned; and while the artillery, with a vast addition to its material, and the machine-gunners, improved out of recognition, Brussiloff's forces remained largely mobs, which could be led to victory against such forces as the Austrians, who were worse than themselves, but could not be depended on

against troops as well disciplined and as ably led as the Germans.

The falling off was moral as well as material and mental. The Russian soldier, though stubborn, is prone to discouragement, and the Slav melancholy had settled on the front. Owing to a censorship, by the side of which the British method was expansive to the point of indiscretion, the Russian people knew nothing of what their army was doing, and the strongest bond between the people and the soldiers was cut. General Alexieff remarked to Mr. Robert Wilton, the *Times* correspondent at Petrograd, "They have converted the army into an anonymous entity void of human face or fame". The soldiers were as much in the dark about the doings of their comrades among the Allies.

It was Russian bureaucratic stupidity which kept the Russian people (and the Allied peoples) ignorant of what the Russian soldier was doing and thinking; but it was another factor, added to this, which kept the Russian soldiers ignorant. There was a growing pro-German and anti-Ally feeling in Petrograd, and this was traceable partly to the German agents and spies who swarmed there, but still more to the existence of a German Court party and of German influences which had never been eliminated from the Court, or from a portion of the aristocracy—especially the landed aristocracy of Courland, Livonia, and Esthonia, and the Baltic provinces—or yet from various commercial and financial circles. At the beginning of the war Petrograd's most fevered anxiety was lest Great Britain should

not come in, and her entry into the war was greeted with enthusiasm as fervent; but in 1916 Sir George Buchanan had to protest against the calumnies levelled against Great Britain in pro-German Petrograd papers. He had enough resolution to exact an apology from the editor of one of them, and he put a stop to

preparing the Revolution, and who, as afterwards became manifest, had determined from the first to make that separate peace which they falsely ascribed to the Tsar's intention. The higher ranks of the army were not affected by the calumny regarding the Tsar, who, in the words of a tribute paid long afterwards to him by Sir



The Winter Campaign of 1916-17: Russians in their gas masks

Photo by Donald A. Gooch

the articles. But the French were less fortunate. The chief military organ in Petrograd had the effrontery to remark sneeringly one day, "The French have captured a tree". At the front the idea was firmly fixed among the soldiers that the Russian army had to do everything, and their Allies had done, and would do, nothing.

Into this frame of mind was insinuated the propaganda of the Germans and of their allies—conscious or unconscious—the Socialists who were

George Buchanan, remained always steadfast to his pledge, stanch to the Allies, and a friend to Britain; but the younger officers felt that the Government was deliberately trying to quench popular enthusiasm for the war; and the rank and file, weary and discontented, were a prey to those who played on these feelings. The fighting spirit was quenched; the army was "soft", though it had still a steel cap in its artillery and "shock" battalions.

The winter of 1916-17 was marked by few engagements. In the two previous winters there had been continual enterprise on the front, despite the inactivity which the weather imposed in respect of larger operations; but raids and patrol encounters were now hardly worthy of mention. Yet to outward appearance the Russian forces were in some respects more formidable. At the end of 1915, the year of Russia's loss of Warsaw and her conquests in Galicia, the men on service numbered 6,000,000. By the end of 1916, a total approaching 16,000,000 had been called up, and 8,000,000 of these were distributed as "reserves" undergoing instruction of a more or less valuable kind in the training depots of towns and cities, or guarding communications. To British visitors in Russia at this time the numbers of men seemed illimitable, their movements continuous. More practised observers noted, however, two things: an increase in the number of deserters, and a shortage of officers of training and ability. Here again quantity was unable to take the place of quality. Training corps and depots produced contingents of "ensigns", but the training was not modern, for almost to the last the offers of assistance in training by France or Great Britain were politely set aside, and these young men had not the prestige or authority of the old-style Russian officer. Respect for them among the men became lowered. The Russian regular army of 2,000,000 had been replaced by a fighting force of double that number, roughly 4,000,000 combatants (plus the reserves); but these

new forces resembled a militia rather than a regular army. Nevertheless, General Alexieff thought well of them, and believed that with service and experience they would again prove a formidable weapon. General Brussiloff's campaign had given them a preliminary hardening of the right kind.

Some part of the army, and this was to prove more trustworthy than the rest, continued the hardening process through part of the winter of 1916-17 by actions fought in conjunction with the Roumanian forces. The deplorable results of Roumanian intervention, which ended in the loss of Bucharest, the Roumanian oil-fields, and 50,000 square miles of rich cornland, have been ascribed by some Roumanians, but not by all, to the defect of Russian support, or, with greater plausibility, to the urgency of the Russian demand, that Roumania should enter the war before she was ready. Some justification for the second view is to be found in the testimony of Mr. Gerard, the United States ambassador in Berlin, that Roumania's entry was a surprise to the German Foreign Office, which had not anticipated that the step would be taken so soon. Roumania certainly had not enough guns or ammunition for the kind of campaign she had to undertake; and if Germany was mistaken about her unwillingness to begin, the Russian authorities were equally mistaken about her ability to take part in a modern war. They were also mistaken about the forces which the Germans could detach against her. But so far as the Russian contribution in men and guns in aid

of the Roumanian effort was concerned, the troops in excess of the number asked for were in position in advance of the Roumanian time-table; and when at length they came into action they stiffened the retiring Roumanian forces and at length arrested their retreat. In the Dobrudja they arrived too late to be of much assistance, and it has been alleged by witnesses competent to speak that the experience of coming from a country where vodka was prohibited into one where drink could be had, did not improve the Russian *moral* or facilitate staff work. But at the back of all the failure lay the absence of organization of transport, and the wretched condition of the railways, which prevented sufficient reinforcements, both Russian and Roumanian, from reaching General Sakharoff, who was in charge of the Russian contingents in the south. It led also to the failure of the attempt to paralyse the movements of von Falkenhayn's armies by striking at his flank through the northern passes, where the Roumanian and Russian forces joined. General Sakharoff's only chance of saving the Dobrudja lay in keeping the Cernavoda bridge open; when it was lost the Dobrudja went with it, and the ultimate retirement of Russians and Roumanians to the line of the Sereth became inevitable.

The more important function of the Russian assistance became that of holding the hinge in the wooded Carpathians, where the Russian line joined that of the Roumanians. The only good way through the eastern elbow of the Carpathians is the Jablonitza

Pass, sometimes called the Pass of the Tartars. Ancient invasions passed through it; it now has a railway to Marmaros Sziget. This pass the Russians never captured; the face of the campaign in 1915 as in 1917 would have been altered if they had. Failing this they might attempt the Kirlibaba Pass, which their patrols had reached in the first Russian invasion of the Bukovina; or the Borgo Pass, which is approached by a road from Dorna Vatra, the point of junction between the two armies. The entrance to all three passes was well guarded by Austro-Hungarian troops under General Koevess, who had done well in the Serbian invasion. He proved competent to hold the Russians, who were under the charge of General Scherbatcheff, in a series of give-and-take encounters in which the attackers sometimes secured positions and prisoners, as close up to Kirlibaba on November 28, 1916, or at Sumaren, a height dominating the Jablonitza, on December 3, 1916, or near Dorna Vatra on December 8. But these positions, gained, according to German reports, at the cost of bloody sacrifices, an assertion which there is unfortunately not much reason to doubt, were not held, and at the end of the year all possibility of converting the "Roumanian blunder"—the phrase was Mr. Lloyd George's—into an advantage had vanished.

The line of the Sereth, on which the Roumanians, protected by Russian rear-guards, fell back, is some forty-five miles in length, and stretches from Galatz to Focsani, which are entrenched camps. The task of the

Russian rear-guards was no light one. On December 22 a Russian force, dispatched from Kishineff, took up a position at Rimnic Sarat, and for five days held up Falkenhayn's advance. In this struggle they lost 7600 prisoners, but no guns, and they still had the spirit for a counter-attack after

behind, they took all their guns with them but three. In this rear-guard fighting the Russian forces acted up to their best traditions of steadiness in adverse circumstances. It might have been hoped that the spirit of such troops could never be vitiated by any subtlety of betrayal. Mean-

while Sakharoff's Russians, sobered in retreat, had fallen back steadily enough from the Dobrudja, crossing the Danube into Bessarabia at Macin and Isaccea successively, and holding these bridge-heads steadfastly till the last. Braila, the grain town, fell with the complete evacuation of the Dobrudja. The Russians destroyed what they could before leaving it, and in such operations their work was generally thorough. Its loss was less important than that of Focsani, which was the northern bastion



The Russo-Roumanian Retreat to the Sereth Line

the position and the town had been abandoned. They retired fighting lighter rear-guard actions on Focsani, and this town, too, had to be given up under the threat of a turning movement by the left wing of the German 9th Army, which crossed the upper reaches of the River Putna, flowing through Focsani to the River Sereth. But though the Russians left 4000 prisoners wounded and unwounded

of the Sereth defences.

After the fall of Braila the troops which had taken it, and had done so well under the impulse of von Mackensen's driving powers, were sent forward after a few days' rest over the swampy and malarious country fringing the banks of the Danube and the Sereth, which meet near Galatz. They had still to reckon with Sakharoff's rear guards, which had taken up a

fortified position between Vadenia and Mihalea, at the junction of yet another swampy river, the Buzeu, with the Sereth. Mackensen's forces rushed the middle of the position on January 11, 1917, and his wings, which were composed of Turkish soldiers, took Vadenia and Mihalea three and four days later. With char-

acters, and while Scherbatcheff and Koevess were watching one another at the openings of the north-eastern passes, a third Russian section between these two was holding back the attempt of Falkenhayn's left wing to open up a new and valuable line of communications from Hungary to the Sereth front at the Focsani end of it.

The River Sereth from its source to Fundeni, which is about half-way between Galatz and Focsani, flows roughly north to south with a slight inclination westwards, and is for part of the distance more roughly parallel to the Carpathians, 40 miles away. The railway runs by the side of it, branching off to Focsani and curving ever more widely away to Rimnic Sarat; another railway, making an angle with this one like the letter V, comes from the Car-



A Heroine of the Russian Army: Mlle Tania, who earned the Cross and Medal of St. George while serving with the Russian Infantry

acteristic reaction the Russians who had been forced out returned to the attack with reinforcements on January 15, and were in possession of Vadenia once more after forty-eight hours' fighting.

While thus Sakharoff was holding, and continued to hold von Mackensen at arm's length from the lower section of the Sereth defences, enabling the Roumanians to remove their stores, and in general to reconsolidate them-

pathians at the Gyimes Pass; and by this railway runs also a river, the Trotus, which rises in the Gyimes Pass, and has various small tributaries coming from the mountains, the Tzul, the Slanic, which joins the bigger stream at Targu Ocna, the Oitoz, rising in the Oitoz Pass and flowing into the Trotus, with another stream, the Casin, on which stands Monestirka. Twenty miles due south stands Pralea on the Susitza. The country

GERMAN & AUSTRIAN FRONTIERS WITH RUSSIA

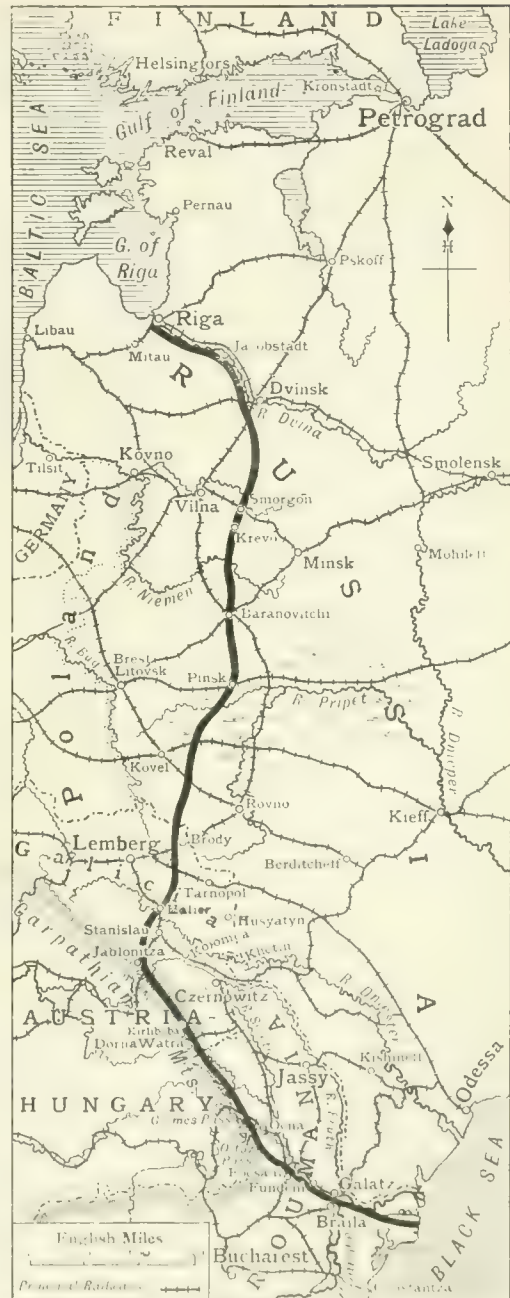
English Miles
0 20 40 60 80 100 120 140
Fortified Towns



is difficult, thick with woods, bare of roads.

In the first week of January, 1917, General Gerok, who with Generals Dellmensingen and Morgen formed von Falkenhayn's left wing, began to press forward from the Oitoz and Gyimes down the river valleys of the Oitoz, Casin, and Susitza in the endeavour to get on to the Trotus river railway. Simultaneously General Goldbach began to thrust forward down the more northerly Slanic. But this was fighting which the Roumanians, no longer menaced by overwhelming artillery, and no longer quite so much at the mercy of the incapacity of their officers, understood as well as the Germans, and some execrable weather aiding them, they held up Goldbach and Gerok with credit. On January 8 the Germans won a local victory at Monestirka, but four days later the Roumanians retook the position in a counter-attack. In the Pralea district the German *communiqués* were constrained to admit that both Russians and Roumanians were "tenaciously defending" their positions. On January 14 they essayed a counter-attack up the Trotus valley, which brought them to the mouth of the Gyimes Pass.

Time was now on the side of the Russians and Roumanians, for the joint offensive of Falkenhayn and Mackensen was losing its momentum, though to describe this slackening on the part of the Austro-German, Turkish, and Bulgarian forces must not be taken as implying any depreciation of the magnitude of the success which they had won, and was not,



The Russo-Roumanian front on the Eve of the Russian Revolution

indeed, altogether at an end. On January 20 a determined thrust by Gerok took the Austro-Germans up

to the Sereth at the Fundeni bridge-head, and the Russians, who were holding a position at Nanesti, a few miles to the west, being thus left in the air, were forced conformably to retire. Thenceforward matters improved. At the end of January General Gurko was sent to the Bukovina to reorganize the resistance, and on February 1 he began an intermittent but protracted counter-offensive, in which the British armoured-car squad-

ron, which had been sent to Roumania, participated. The fighting went on through February and March, with one conspicuous fight at Jacobeny, where the positions were lost and won back again on February 10 and February 11 by the Russo-Roumanians. The general results up to the end of March may be summed up by saying that while the Germans were deprived of none of their gains they were unable to add to them.

E. S. G.

CHAPTER II

THE FALL OF TSARDOM IN RUSSIA

(March, 1917)

Army and Autocracy—Revolution of 1905—Russian Dumas—Coalescence of Parties during the War—Military Failures and Discontent—Disagreements of the War Office—General Sukhomlinoff—Ammunition Shortage—The Higher Commands—Depression after Warsaw—Break-down in Food Supply—Mutual Distrust of Classes—Sir G. Buchanan and the Tsar—The Court—Rasputin's Career, Influence, and Death—M. Miliukoff's Denunciation—Kerensky's Forecast—The Imperial Family and the Tsar—Outbreak of March 11—Protopopoff's Machine-guns—Meeting of Guards Regiments—The Mob Out of Hand—M. Rodzianko's Provisional Government—Appearance of the Bolsheviks—*Prikaz*, No. 1—The Tsar's Abdication.

AUTOCRACY in Russia, put to the test of war, which is the maker and breaker of autocrats, was tried, found wanting, and fell in the Revolution of March, 1917. The issue had been long in the balance; it had been postponed by the outbreak of war, which united Russia in an enthusiasm common to all; it was precipitated, not because war's terrible medicine had disclosed the rottenness of the machinery of autocracy, but because the breakdowns had converted the army, which suffered by them, from being the prop of autocracy into

its enemy. To the last the Tsar leaned on his army; to the last the revolutionary leaders feared lest the army should wreck their hopes. Looking back on the incidents of the revolution, it seems as if this or that incident might have turned the scale: that had the Tsar listened to Alexieff's advice and refrained from sending the troops to Petrograd which joined the mutineers, or had General Voyéikov, the Palace Commandant, not suppressed an eleventh-hour telegram to the Tsar from the President of the Duma—the long-expected might have

failed to happen. Such speculations are illusory; the causes which produced the Revolution had been long maturing; they awaited but the hour. Many of them, most of them, were remote from the war, though the war served to throw them into prominence. Some which assumed at the moment a conspicuous importance were no more than symptoms of the deep disorder of the Russian Empire.

Russia had made an attempt twelve years before to free herself from the shackles of an administration which was mediæval and semi-Oriental in form. The so-called revolution of 1905 missed fire; but those who suppressed it attempted a compromise with forces the magnitude of which they discerned, and, though many of the revolutionists were executed or imprisoned or driven into exile, a new "Constitution" was granted to the Russian people, and their representatives were called into council by an elective Duma. The Duma was bound by many restrictions. Its method of election was such that the masses were inadequately represented, and a wholly disproportionate vote was given to the nobility and the landed and propertied classes. Nor had it any real power in administration, or in sanctioning or withholding expenditure; and its legislative functions were limited to recommending measures without the authority to give them the force of law. As in Germany, the ministers were responsible to the Emperor, not to Parliament, whether Duma or Reichstag, but the Duma's powers were more limited than those of the Reichstag, and the

system by which it was elected even less representative of the people.

Nevertheless, the Duma gave for the first time expression to the "voice of the people", and in the first Duma this voice was so unpleasing to the ear of the autocracy, the landed interests, the bureaucracy, and to that vast police system by which Russia was schooled, coerced, or terrorized, that after the first Duma had been dissolved, its successors were elected on a basis which gave even smaller representation than before to the masses. The alteration was effected by tampering with the system of election. The result was to produce Dumas which not only were unrepresentative of the people's will, but did not even give expression to it by voice. The Social Revolutionaries, or the parties of the Extreme Left as they were careful to call themselves while they remained in the country—the more forceful of them, Trotsky among them, had taken refuge in Switzerland or elsewhere—were swamped or silent, and the Duma sank into a kind of torpor. But the war, which at first had awakened Russia to enthusiasm, began to awaken other feelings as it staggered on from blunder to blunder; and once more the Duma became articulate. More than that, it became united; the divergence between the extreme Conservatives and the extreme Radicals or Socialists, which it had seemed that nothing could bridge, began to close up, till, at the end of the second year of the war, Conservatives, Constitutional Democrats, Peasant Parties, and Socialists, among whom was Kerensky, coalesced in a

solid party, named the Progressive Block, which was insistent that the Tsar should choose Ministers who represented the feeling of the country, the will of the people. The failures of the war were the first cause of the demand; but those causes of the failure which were not strictly military in character, but more the outcome of bungling, incompetence, and the unchangeable tyranny of custom, became even more powerful in fanning discontent into rebellion.

The military failures were so apparent that it is hardly requisite to recapitulate them, except in so far as recapitulation may disclose inner causes on which the Russian censorship for three years enforced silence. The first was the unpreparedness for war, and the dismal state of the defences in Russian Poland. In spite of a protest from the military authorities in France, the Polish fortresses had been dismantled, and at the beginning of hostilities were useless as a support to mobile armies, though the resistance offered by Ossowiecz showed that they might have been of value. Kovno, the premature fall of which in 1915 all but precipitated a much greater disaster than befell the Russian forces retreating north of Warsaw, was a further proof, if a negative one, that the fortresses ought to have been re-organized. It was surrendered owing to the cowardice or treachery of its commandant, who fled, a raving lunatic, and afterwards shot himself. But the absence of a definite strategy of defence was typical of a widespread disorganization and disagreement in the Russian Great General Staff. The

Grand-Duke Nicholas was at odds with General Sukhomlinoff, the Minister of War, and a complete estrangement between Head-quarters in the field and the War Office continued while these two held their posts. The Grand-Duke Sergius was also at daggers drawn with General Sukhomlinoff over the Artillery Department, and in the struggles between these two the artillery equipment of the armies went begging. General Sukhomlinoff was afterwards tried by the Revolutionary Government, and condemned to hard labour for life on charges of high treason, fraud, and breach of trust; yet he had done a great deal for the man-power of Russia's armies, and for this credit should be given him, especially when his constant struggle to make the army independent of the royal family is remembered. His gravest dereliction was in respect of providing the armies with guns, shells, boots, and clothing. The cry from the armies for ammunition began in the third week of the first month of the war; it never ceased; it was never satisfied. General Sukhomlinoff promised shells; the armies, especially the army of the Carpathians, proceeded as if the shells were guaranteed; and the failure in the Carpathians, under General Ivanoff, no less than the subsequent crash of the front of General Radko Dmitrieff, was due to the fact that the first of these generals had not the guns to get through, and the second of them saw his men resisting von Mackensen's blast of high-explosives in April-May, 1915, without sufficient ammunition for their rifles, and with only three

shells a gun. M. Rodzianko, the President of the Duma, who had been to the front where Dmitrieff and Korniloff were thus placed in a position of peril that subsequent events proved only too real, saw these things with his own eyes, and tried to get them put right. He tried in vain. The

pointed Commander-in-Chief because it was felt that he represented the Tsar, and the appointment was a good one, for he was a man of great force of character and driving power; but his Chief of Staff, General Yanushkevitch, was a Court appointment, and quite inadequate to his duties. Russia



An Imperial Group in Russia shortly before the Revolution: the ex-Tsar Nicholas with his son and daughters and a party of Russian officers.

The figures in the central group, reading from left to right, are those of the Grand-Duchess Anastasia, the ex-Tsar's youngest daughter; General Count Grabbé (standing behind); the Grand-Duchess Olga, the ex-Tsar's eldest daughter; Nicholas II; the Grand Duke Alexis (ex-Tsarevitch); and the Grand-Duchesses Tatiana and Marie.

War Minister was not solely to blame. His department was slow: but the manufacturers were slower and equally avaricious, and there was no public opinion, no outspoken Press in Russia which could, by its expressed indignation or uncasiness, kindle somnolence into activity. But these things became known, and the indignation, being suppressed, smouldered.

Nor were the army commands ideal. The Grand-Duke Nicholas was ap-

had good generals in Alexieff, Ruzsky, Ivanoff, and Brussiloff, but they only attained the higher commands by the elimination of the unfit, and that elimination was commonly accompanied by desperate losses among the troops, and depletion of the scanty stock of armaments. Rennenkampf was a terrible failure; it was the break-down of his staff work and intelligence department in East Prussia that contributed to the irretrievable disaster of Tannen-

berg, though the army swallowed up there was commanded by Samsonoff, who expiated his blunders by blowing out his brains. The disaster has been called irretrievable; so, in a strategic sense, it was, because it for ever destroyed the prospect of a double Russian offensive, towards East Prussia on the north and Cracow on the south.

In the south, where the genius of Ivanoff, Alexieff, Brussiloff, Dmitrieff, and Ruzsky had an opportunity to display itself, victories had been won, and would have been continued had the supply of guns been equal to the ability of the commanders or the spirit of the soldiers. But the double handicap of having to retrieve the failure of Rennenkampf and Samsonoff, and of having to suspend operations about Przemyśl and the Carpathian passes because the Artillery Department in Petrograd neither could nor would hasten supplies, reduced the Southern Armies to an impotent defensive. They stayed in their trenches and were beaten, as is the fate of unprovided armies.

In a moral as well as a strategic sense Russia did not recover from the blow. A profound discouragement was bred by the loss of the great Warsaw salient, its fortresses, and of the hundreds and thousands of Russian soldiers who were lost with it; for it was the Russian soldier who paid for all. The height of the national enthusiasm at the beginning of the war became the measure of its depression under failure; and since, both by its numbers and in its feeling, the army *was* the nation, in a sense that it never had been

before, the discontent grew and interpenetrated.

Similarly, the disorganization in army matters infected the general organization of the country, already disturbed by Russia's state of siege. The tragic thing about this disorganization was that it grew with the efforts which were made by the Tsar and his advisers to remedy Russia's military defects. Thanks in part to Russia's Allies, the supply of munitions was largely increased in and after 1916; and by the end of that year something like 16,000,000 Russians, from first to last, had been called to the colours. Of these, enormous numbers were quartered in towns and villages, and were a strain on the food resources, just as the transport of food and the growing supply of munitions was a strain on the railways.

Moreover, the withdrawal of labour from among the peasants was prejudicial to agriculture, even as the withdrawal from industries and from the mines decreased the output of articles manufactured either for war or for the civil population, and drove yet another nail into the coffin of the moribund railways. Finally, although the enthusiasm for war had brought together all classes of the population—the official classes, the industrial classes, and that portion of the *intelligentsia* who were not soaked in revolutionary doctrines—the gulf between the governing classes and the governed, which had been widening for so many years, had not been closed, but only bridged. Under the pressure of misfortune, of muddle, and

of privations which were more severe and widespread in the big towns of Russia than in any other country, the gulf began to gape again. Moreover, discontent began to find scapegoats. First were remembered the unredeemed promises of reform of the long years before the war, then the oppressions and the scandals of an administration that stifled free speech and sent impatient reformers to Siberia; and, at length, a kind of fury arose against those who, having so long governed the people contrary to their will, were now to blame for the miseries of an unsuccessful and interminable war.

Nor was the widening of the gap all on one side. If the governed were filled with discontent, the governing classes could not overcome their mistrust. Before the revolution the most valuable public bodies in Russia were *Zemstvos*, local bodies created by Tsar Alexander II, and intended by him to educate all classes in local self-government. These bodies had been steadily growing in influence, usefulness, and representative character, and during the war had been invaluable in preventing the utter break-down of provisioning the armies. But when it was proposed by M. Rodzianko, President of the Duma, on the suggestion of the Grand-Duke Nicholas, to summon a Zemstvo Congress in order to deal with the question of transport, he was brusquely told that he was trying to foment a revolution. The Russian official world was in fear of the Russian people; the fatal mistake that the Tsar made was that of not perceiving that the Russian

people and the Russian army were no longer distinct.

There was no volcanic suddenness about the revolution; its advent had been signalized by the phenomenon of a Duma united in spite of the diversity of its parties, and insistent on calling the Tsar's Ministers to account. There were many other signs to which the Tsar and the Tsaritsa, if blind, were wilfully so. The British Ambassador, Sir George Buchanan, told the Tsar without any reserve in 1916 that he was gravely imperilling his throne; there is excellent reason for believing that Lord Kitchener's mission to Russia was not wholly military, and that when Lord Milner went he also had advice to proffer on the relations between the Tsar, his Ministers, and the people. The least observant travellers in Russia in the winter of 1916 were aware that everybody was thinking, not of the war, but of revolution; and the creeping paralysis of all military activities was similarly easy to perceive.

How was it that the Tsar could not, did not, or would not see? It was partly because he was encompassed by the *okhrana*, the Department of Police, instituted to "protect"¹ the Tsar from his people, and forming, in fact, an impenetrable barrier between them. It was partly because of the strong pro-German party at Court, springing originally from the nobility of Courland and the other Baltic provinces, and fostered by German penetration and German intrigue; and it was in part due to the influence of the Tsaritsa, an autocrat more determined

¹ Whence the name.

than the Emperor, for her ambitions were bound up with their son, the Tsarevitch. It was her affection for him which led to the introduction into Court life and influence of the monk, Rasputin, of all the figures of that strange time the strangest and most sinister to Western eyes.

Rasputin, whose village name was Gregory Pianyk, was a dissolute peasant who had a reputation for occult and healing powers. It would have been impossible for such a man to find a place at any Court except that of Petrograd, but the Empress became interested in him because of the illness and constitutional delicacy of her son. Rasputin was summoned to cure some minor but troublesome affection, and was able to do so by what probably amounted to a form of hypnotism. Henceforward his career was made, and he announced himself—and was so believed to be by the Tsaritsa—the guardian of the Tsarevitch's life. He became, indeed, the power behind the throne, the dispenser of favours, the maker and un-maker of officials, of Ministers. The dismissal of M. Samarin, the Procurator of the Holy Synod, was due to him; his dislike of the Grand-Duke Nicholas, who had threatened to hang him, was a factor in the exiling of the Grand-Duke to the Caucasus. Finally, the pro-German party made him their tool. The consequences were seen in the replacement of M. Sazonoff, a good friend of the Entente, by M. Stürmer, who was more than suspected of pro-German leanings, and of the appointment of M. Protopopoff to the Home Office.

The scandalous life led by Rasputin, added to the scandal of his illicit influence, made his name a byword throughout Russia. It disgraced the Tsar and the Tsaritsa in the minds of the common people; it filled nobles and democrats, reactionaries and socialists alike, with disgust. The army had felt more than any other class the ignominy of his influence and interference, and it was the army that sentenced and executed him. He was killed (December 29, 1916) at a supper in the Yusupor Palace in Petrograd by a party mainly of officers. The Tsaritsa was overwhelmed with grief and rage at the death of the "holy man"; the Tsar was made to share her indignation, and the whole political world was threatened with reprisals. They took the form of an increased stringency of reactionary measures, and in a stiffen-



The ex-Tsaritsa of Russia
(From a photograph by Boissonas)



Gregory Rasputin, the Evil Genius of the Russian Court

ing of the position of the favourites, Stürmer, Protopopoff, and the rest, whom Rasputin had approved.

The Duma, shorn though it had been of its powers, was the storm barometer of the times. On November 1, 1916, M. Miliukoff denounced in the Duma, Manuilov (Stürmer's secretary, known to be a spy and a traitor), Rasputin, the Metropolitan Pitirim (a prelate under Rasputin's influence), and finally described M. Stürmer himself as in the first rank of these plunderers "who conduct the most vital affairs of the State in accordance with their personal interest". He voiced "the painful and terrible suspicion, the sinister rumours of treason and of dark forces working for Germany in order to pave the way for a shameful peace, as the price of the destruction of our national unity.

In the last phrase ran the fear that united, at that moment, the army and those who aimed at a new social order, whether by constitutional or revolutionary means. The army feared that it was to be betrayed, and all its sacrifices wasted, in order that the Empress—whose name M. Miliukoff did not scruple to mention in the phrase: "the victory of the Court party which is grouped round the Empress"—should secure the dynasty against the growing democratic movement. M. Miliukoff ended by demanding a Cabinet which should deserve the trust of the nation. This resounding speech¹ had a remarkable sequel. The Ministers of War and of Marine publicly thanked the courageous Liberal, who had taken his life into his hands to speak the truth; Stürmer withdrew to the Caucasus; and the struggle against the "dark forces" was joined by the Council of the Empire (the Upper House) and the Congress of Nobles. The struggle went on with various manifestations for months. One of them, already described, resulted in the murder of Rasputin. Others, no less significant, though less violent, were evident in the growing utterances of discontent in all classes and in many quarters. One of such utterances, little noticed at the time except by the secret police, was evidence that the Revolutionaries were underground hard at work preparing for upheaval. It was delivered by Kerensky, then known as a voluble young lawyer, in the Duma, and it contained a precise indication of the programme that had

¹ It was long censored, and was not printed in England till January 11, 1917, in the *New Freepress*.

been decided upon by the Socialists in regard to the war.¹ "We think that the man-power and material resources of this country are exhausted, and that the time has come to prepare for a termination of the European conflict. It must be settled on a basis of self-determination for all nationalities. All Governments must forgo to the same extent their Imperialistic aims." Months afterwards M. Kerensky was to repeat this formula in very different circumstances, and to palliate by it the treachery of the Russian Bolsheviks.

The Tsar and the Tsaritsa were not ignorant of what was going on; certainly they did not lack warnings, for these were spoken by honest men who had access to them, including the Grand-Duke Mikhailovitch; the Grand-Duchess Victoria, and M. Rodzianko, President of the Duma, who visited the Tsar at Head-quarters in January, 1916, to make a despairing appeal. It was in vain. The Tsar was a fatalist, the Tsaritsa a greater autocrat than he; and both believed the army was with them. Possibly the Tsaritsa, infuriated with Rasputin's death, had most to do with the direction of internal policy. It was she who was instrumental in retaining M. Protopopoff—a blinded lunatic who believed he could repress a revolution—and Piti-rim, and who persuaded the Tsar to replace Stürmer and other ministers by Prince Golitsyn and a new set of flunkys.

In place of listening to the Duma's demands for an honest Cabinet, the

Duma was threatened with dissolution, and its reassembly was postponed. It met again in February, and by that time the revolution was beginning to stir—underground. On February 27, while Kerensky was making his speech at the first sitting of the reopened Duma, "peaceful" Labour demonstrations began in the streets. They went on for some days, with various sporadic disturbances, while the Duma discussed the food question. The secret police had informed the Tsar and Tsaritsa of the impending outbreak; they and their advisers hesitated about the way to cope with it, first resolving to give way to the Duma, then determining to close it and to take strong measures. The strong measures were not taken soon enough.

On Sunday, March 11, some Pavlovtsy Guards began to "remove" a demonstrating crowd on the Nevsky Prospect; shots were fired, some from the housetops; about a hundred people were killed or wounded. The Pavlovtsy Guards were incensed at the part they had been called on to play; revolutionary influences were at work among them; they resolved to mutiny. There was more firing on the same day. It proceeded from the police and machine-guns which Protopopoff had ordered to be posted on the roofs of houses to "suppress the revolutionary movement". The result was not to suppress anything, but to add fuel to the growing flame. M. Rodzianko sent a message to the Tsar, at the Mohilev head-quarters, praying him not to delay reform, and telling him that anarchy reigned in the capital. "Delay is impossible", he repeated.

¹ Quoted from Mr. Robert Wilson's invaluable account of the Russian Revolution in *Kerensky's Story* (Arnold).

"Every delay is fatal." The message never reached the Emperor: it was held up by the Palace Commandant, General Voyéikov. Next day the Duma was prorogued.

Protopopoff began to take further strong measures. He disguised his police in military uniforms, and sent them out to the strike districts, where their machine-guns did much execution. But meanwhile the one fatal blow to every plan to "suppress" the revolution was falling: the regiments were beginning to mutiny. Two Reserve regiments were the first to open the gap; they forced a bridge, joined the strikers, and seized an arsenal. The Litovsky Guards murdered their

officers and sallied out into the streets; they were joined by the Volhyntsy Guards and by part of the Preobrasheoksy, and the half-crazed, infuriated mob poured forth to the Taurus Palace, where the Duma sat. President Rodzianko tried to hold the balance firm; not to yield to the impassioned mob, but to take decisive action only with the consent of the whole army, if possible with that of the country. He sent messages to General Alexieff, General Ruzsky, General Brussiloff, as well as to the Tsar and to the Grand-Duke Nicholas. The object was to unite all orderly elements in a Provisional Government.

But meanwhile the disorderly ele



Photo by Oana, Tietze, Ltd.

The Eve of the Revolution in Russia: the crowd before the Duma, Petrograd

The Great World War

ments outside, fermented by the Socialists and Revolutionaries, were taking charge of Petrograd. The prisons were broken open (Manuiloff escaped); convicts set fire to the Courts; the head-quarters of the Revolutionary forces were established at the fortress of St. Peter and St.

Revolutionaries were out for a revolution.

President Rodzianko was trying to establish some oasis of stability in the shifting sands of disorder. He could get no reply from the Tsar; he conferred with the responsible members of the Duma's parties, and at a conference, at which the Grand-Duke Michael was present, determined to form a Provisional Executive Committee of twelve members, which was to select a Provisional Government. The Socialists, while affecting to agree with these sound principles, were preparing their own "Council of Workmen's and Soldiers' Delegates", which was destined to overthrow all that the sane and intelligent classes in Russia hoped to gain from the downfall of the old order and the setting up of a new one.

The party of Reform

was, in fact, helpless against them from the beginning, as helpless as was the Tsar, to whom the Provisional Elective Committee addressed a telegram begging him (yet again) to convoke a new parliament and to form a new Cabinet capable of governing the country in accord with the Parliament's wishes. It is probable that even at this moment Rodzianko recognized that such measures were too late, such hopes



Photo. by Bulla, Petrograd

The State Prison, Petrograd, set on fire by the Revolutionaries

Paul. Archbishop Pitirim, M. Stürmer, M. Protopopoff, General Kurloff, of the Secret Police, were taken there. Meanwhile the mob's passions were gaining the upper hand, and the brutality of revolution was being exercised on many innocent and unfortunate persons, who might, or might not, be officials or generals. The Astoria Hotel, where members of the Allied Missions lived, was attacked. The

impossible of realization. The first and last blow to them was inflicted at this moment by the Socialist Revolutionaries, who, at the instigation of a Bolshevik, Nahamkez, began the circulation among the troops of the infamous *Prikaz*, or Order, No. 1, which called upon soldiers to disobey their officers and take charge of arms and internal administration.

Meanwhile the abdication of the Tsar seemed, and indeed was, a minor incident in the passage of Russia from her position as one of the Great Powers to a disordered rabble of violent and treacherous factions. On Monday, March 12, the Tsar began without haste to prepare to travel from Head-quarters to Petrograd. When half-way there the wire into Tsarkoe Selo and the Empress was found to be cut; he was warned to come no farther. He decided to go on to Pskov, and there consult with General Ruzsky. At Pskov, on Wednesday, March 14, he received in the saloon of the Imperial train two emissaries from the Duma, M. Guchkoff, and M. Shulgin. He was not unprepared. For three days before he had been receiving telegrams from General Alexieff begging him to send no more troops to Petrograd (there to mutiny) and to comply with the wishes of the Duma, even to abdication. He was quite calm. According to a narrative contributed to the *Retch* by M. Shulgin, General Ruzsky brought in the two delegates, and the only other person present was Count Frederiks. The Tsar greeted them "rather courteously than coldly" and Guchkoff began to speak—at consider-

able length. He finished by saying that the only way out of the situation would be by the Tsar's abdication in favour of Alexis, the Tsar's son, with the Grand-Duke Michael as Regent. General Ruzsky leaned over to Shulgin and whispered that this had



The Grand-Duke Michael, in whose favour Nicholas II abdicated as Tsar of all the Russias on March 15, 1917

already been decided, and then the Tsar began to speak, far more calmly than Gutchkoff. "Yesterday and today," he said, "I have been thinking, and have decided to abdicate. But," he added, "I have realized that I cannot part with my son. . . . I hope you will understand this. . . . So I have decided to abdicate in favour of my brother Michael."

They were a little taken aback; but

clearly the Tsar was master of the situation, in which, like another unhappy monarch, "he nothing common did, or mean". He went to his own carriage, and, after an hour or so, returned with some loose sheets of paper on which he had written the Act of Abdication. He begged them to read it, and subsequently, having made one or two verbal alterations in it, signed it a few minutes before midnight, on March 15, 1917. It ran as follows, according to the text reprinted in Mr. Marcossou's work on *The Re-birth of Russia*:—

By the grace of God, We, Nicholas II, Emperor of all the Russias, Tsar of Poland, Grand-Duke of Finland, to all our faithful subjects be it known:

In the days of a great struggle against a foreign enemy, who has been endeavouring for three years to enslave our country, it pleased God to send Russia a further painful trial. Internal troubles threatened to have a fatal effect on the further progress of this obstinate war. The destinies of Russia, the honour of her heroic Army, the happiness of the people, and the whole future of our beloved country demand that the war should be conducted at all costs to a victorious end. The cruel enemy is making his last efforts, and the moment is near when our valiant

Army, in concert with our glorious Allies, will finally overthrow the enemy. In these decisive days in the life of Russia we have thought that we owed to our people the close union and organization of all its forces for the realization of rapid victory; for which reason, in agreement with the Imperial Duma, we have recognized that it is for the good of the country that we should abdicate the Crown of the Russian State and lay down the Supreme Power.

Not wishing to separate ourselves from our beloved son, we bequeath our heritage to our brother, the Grand-Duke Michael Alexandrovitch, with our blessing for the future of the Russian State. We bequeath it to our brother to govern in full union with the national representatives sitting in the Legislative Institutions, and to take his inviolable oath to them in the name of our well-beloved country.

We call on all faithful sons of our native land to fulfil their sacred and patriotic duty in obeying the Tsar and to aid him with the representatives of the nation to conduct the Russian State in the way of prosperity and glory.

"May God help Russia."

In these words, austere and dignified, the last of the Romanoffs bade farewell to his country.

E. S. G.

CHAPTER III

THE ENTRY OF AMERICA

(April, 1917.)

The Compensation for Russia—The Motive of the United States—Provocations of Germany—Effect of the War on Interests of Neutrals—Causes of Conflict with the Central Powers—Austro-German Intrigues in the United States—The Case of Herr Bunz and his Accomplices—Dr. Dumba, Lieutenant Fay, Captains Boy-Ed and von Papen—The Submarine Outrages—Germany's Declaration of February 19, 1915—Conflicting Views stated in Correspondence concerning Sinking of *Sussex*—Leading Passages quoted—The *Lusitania*—The *Arabic*—The *Ancona*—The *Sussex*—Immediate Cause of Final Rupture—President Wilson's Guiding Principle—Visits of Mr. Balfour and Marshal Joffe—American Personalities in the War—Naval Position of United States—Other American Powers.

THE entry of America into the war was the counterpart to the disappearance of Russia from the ranks of the Allies. The events were contemporary, and the gain to the opponents of the Central Powers balanced the loss. A German advocate could, it is true, make out a plausible case for his contention that the advantage was not on the side of the Western nations. Nothing could be the exact equivalent for the cessation of a Russian menace to the vulnerable eastern frontiers of the German and Austrian Empires. When the Tsardom crumbled, and the forces of disruption, social, political, and geographical, which had long been working for its destruction, were allowed full play, great multitudes of soldiers were left free to be used either for defence or offence on the eminently defensible frontiers of the south and west. But the United States of America could bring into action forces immediately and ultimately available such as Russia could never have supplied. The republic needed no financial assistance; no ever-present threat of internal disorders weakened

its arm; and it was placed far beyond the reach of any retaliation. It could give where Russia had had to ask help. It had no reason to fear the depletion of its resources. It could look forward to a long participation in the struggle with the security that its capacity to act with effect would grow. For a time the strain on the Western Powers might be increased as German and Austrian troops were brought from the East; but in a not distant future the armed forces of the United States must redress the balance. Even if disaster should overtake British, French, and Italian armies, America would still continue to apply a severe form of pressure to the two great military monarchies. They could not reach her, and she could, to put it at the lowest, shut them out from indispensable markets. Therefore the support of the United States was a full equivalent, if not more, for the collapse of Russia.

The relief came to the Allies because Germany had deliberately provoked American intervention. When the war began, the people of the United States were, no doubt, on the whole

more disposed to sympathize with the British Empire and France than with Germany and Austria. There was, indeed, no hostility to the German people. Germans had played a large part in the formation and history of the republic. They had been among the earlier elements of the population in times when the future United States of America were still the "plantations" for the "tide-water" colonies of the monarchy of Great Britain and Ireland. These first settlers had been very greatly reinforced in later ages by German immigration. Americans were always ready to acknowledge that they owed much to German science and scholarship; but they drew a sharp line between the German people who had so freely mingled with themselves and the military Governments of the two empires. The arrogance, the coarse insistence of prevailing classes in Germany on their military strength, the ostentatious fashion in which these directing personages claimed a right to dominate the world because they thought they could overpower all opposition, was offensive to Americans.

They had come into sharp collision with the rude self-assertion of German officers during the war with Spain. That experience had given them an insight into the militarist morality of the Hohenzollern rule. The invasion of Belgium, even if it had not been marked by so many acts of cruel violence, would have aroused strong feelings of reprobation. Therefore, though Germany had many friends in the States, even apart from the descendants of old and modern immi-

grants, the majority of Americans leaned to the side of Great Britain and France.

Yet they valued their freedom from the evils imposed on Europeans by the complications and rivalries of the Old World. They would in all probability have stood aside to the end if the German Empire (for the share of Austria was subordinate), relying on the unmeasured use of force as its one means of attaining to its aims, had not compelled them to recognize that their neutrality could be prolonged only by a tame submission to the evils of war without the protection which the employment of their strength to defend themselves would not fail to give. Americans were driven to see that the victory of a nation animated by such a spirit as Germany had displayed would put every free and peace-loving community under the horror of a perpetual military menace. The people of the United States are by temperament, and by the view they take of their interests, peaceful, as their long-suffering with their Spanish-American neighbours in Mexico has amply shown. It was characteristic of the ruling classes in Germany to mistake a love of peace for pusillanimity. So Americans were subjected to the long course of provocation which at last compelled them to see that they must choose between the attempt to preserve a useless neutrality by degrading compliances, and war.

No great naval conflict can be conducted without some measure of disturbance to neutrals. In the Great World War, which affected every sea, questions have inevitably arisen be-

tween the Government of the United States and the Western Powers. But although the correspondence which ensued between these parties was at times not wholly free from acrimony, and although the questions debated were often highly interesting, neither the points at issue nor the statements of the respective cases were directly relevant to the subject of this chapter. It is enough to note that there was a complete difference in kind between such disputes as did arise out of America's complaints of British action and her protests against the measures taken by Germany. When we say "British action" we do not mean that the United States had occasion to make a distinction in principle between the British Empire and its Allies, but only that the incidents which gave rise to protests and answers were naturally created by the British Fleet simply because it carried on the blockade of Germany in the Atlantic and the North Sea. The differences of opinion which divided the two Governments owed their existence to such matters as interference with the transport of American mails, or the legitimacy of our practice of taking American vessels into port in order to search them for the purpose of detecting the presence of contraband in their cargoes. These disputes form a subject by themselves, and are rich in matter for the disquisitions of international lawyers; but they did not alter the friendly relations of the parties, even when they produced some passing irritation.

The great causes of controversy between the United States and the

Central European Powers were essentially different. There were two which, though they were operative at the same time, and tended to the same end, were so far distinct that they can be treated apart, in the order of their importance. The first, and minor one, was the abuse of American neutrality by the agents of the German and Austrian Governments resident within the United States. The second was the persistent determination of the Central Powers to disturb, and, if possible, to destroy the commerce of the Western Powers—and in particular the British—by sinking ships and sacrificing the lives of crews and passengers. Austria played its part, in this employment of the methods of barbarism, somewhat in the background, because its fleet was limited to the Adriatic and adjacent waters. Germany appeared in the forefront, because its field of operations included the four seas of Britain and the Atlantic. But, as the case of the *Ancona* shows, there was no dissimilarity of spirit between the two. In so far as these acts of destruction were events in the actual operations of the war they are dealt with separately.¹ Our present purpose is to show how they forced the United States into participation in the war.

The breaches of neutrality on the part of American sympathizers with the Central Powers, and of the agents of these belligerents within the States, were not all of the same character. At the very beginning of the war some German vessels which were in American ports shipped and carried

¹ See Vol. VI, Chapter XXIV; III, Chapter X; IV, Chapters IV and V; V, Chapter XVII.

stores and munitions for the use of those of their countrymen who were, for a brief space, free to act as commerce-destroyers at sea. Other stores and munitions were smuggled out later for the same purpose. Such enterprises as these were of the same nature as the sale of munitions of war to British or French purchasers. There was a difference in fact because the superiority of the British and the French fleets enabled them to cover the transport of this contraband of war, while Germany had no such power. But in principle they were identical. When Herr Karl Bünz, managing director of the Hamburg-Amerika Line, and three other officers of the company, were brought to trial on a charge of violating the neutrality of the United States by sending supplies to German cruisers (November, 1915), the Federal Court decided that the act was not in itself unlawful, though the goods so sent would always be liable to capture as contraband. Herr Bünz and others were subsequently condemned for falsifying clearance papers, an offence against the municipal law of the United States (December, 1915). If this had been all, no ill-feeling need have been provoked.

The case was very different when it was discovered that agents of the Central Powers—not merely private persons acting from patriotism or sympathy or hope of profit, but actual officials of those belligerents—were engaged in operations of a most offensive character within the States. Signs of their activity could not fail to be detected, since they must needs work

through other agents by means of bribery, and such instruments are rarely either discreet or faithful. Mr. Lansing, United States Secretary of State, was able to prove later on that Count Bernstorff had been egregiously misled by swindlers who played on his credulity. But direct evidence of the most compromising order was obtained when an American newspaper correspondent, Mr. James J. Archibold, was arrested by the British authorities at Falmouth in September, 1915, and was found to be engaged in carrying dispatches from the Austrian Envoy in the States (Dr. Dumba) to Baron Burian at Vienna. The envoy explicitly stated that he was engaged in organizing strikes, and said:—

“We can disorganize and hold up for months, if not entirely prevent, the manufacture of munitions at Bethlehem and the Middle West, which, in the opinion of the



Mr. Robert Lansing, United States Secretary of State



Count Bernstorff, German Ambassador to the United States before the Declaration of War

German military attaché, is of great importance, and amply outweighs the expenditure of the money involved".

The American Government insisted on the recall of Dr. Dumba, who left on October 5. A Dr. Goricar, formerly Austrian consular agent, supplied confirmation of the discovery. But the truth was independently revealed by the arrest of some twenty-five agents of this diplomatic intrigue for theft of magnetoes and other parts of machinery made for the Western Powers.

In October, 1915, the American courts were busy with cases of espionage. A Lieutenant Fay, who had served in France at the beginning of the war, and had been sent to America to be employed in these intrigues, was brought to trial. He

implicated Captain Boy-Ed, German Naval Attaché, and the Austrian Military Attaché, Captain von Papen. This officer had allowed himself to speak, in one of the papers captured from Mr. Archibold, of "these idiotic Yankees". It was also known that £150,000 had been transmitted to the States through the house of Speyer & Co., of New York, to be used for these purposes. Captains Boy-Ed and von Papen were, of course, compelled to leave the United States. The practical results of this impudent intrigue do not appear to have been considerable, but they gave much natural offence. The resentment was stronger in the Eastern States, which were directly affected, than in the Western, which were remote, and were, so far, but little interested in the European War. Yet they notably diminished such American sympathy with Germany and Austria as had existed, and they spread distrust of their spirit and methods. Their whole propaganda gave increasing offence. It was coarse and noisy, as well as meddlesome. The chief director, Dr. Dernburg, was forced to return to Europe.

The propaganda and the intrigue were, however, only annoying, and could be dealt with by the expulsion of the directors, and the punishment of subordinate agents who were found to be committing criminal acts. The outrages of German submarines were unpardonable. Yet the United States bore with them patiently, till they could be no longer endured. The successive stages by which the final rupture of peaceful relations was

reached are very fully recorded in the published correspondence of the Governments.

The starting-point is to be dated in February, 1915, when the Germans first avowed their intention to sink all vessels found in the waters round Great Britain. The American Government replied in a note of February 12 that "It would be difficult for the United States to view the act in any other light than as an indefensible violation of neutral rights, which would be very hard indeed to reconcile with the friendly relations now happily subsisting between the two Governments". The German answer, as given by the ambassador, Count Bernstorff, amounted in reality to just this—though his real meaning was wrapped in diplomatic verbiage—that as Germany had no other means of counterbalancing the naval superiority of Great Britain except by the fullest possible use of the submarine, it could not be expected to abstain from employing the only instrument at its command. On February 19 his Government said as much almost in plain words. It promised to respect American ships as far as possible, but declined to be responsible for "accidents", and it distinctly told the Government of the United States that the neutrality of America was, in fact partial, since munitions of war were supplied to the only belligerents who were in a position to import them.

The point at issue may be said to have been fairly stated. The United States maintained that the export of munitions of war by private persons to either belligerent alliance was law-

ful, though such contraband could be intercepted and confiscated. The Germans replied that they could not import the munitions, and that their enemies alone profited by them. Therefore, since they could not intercept and confiscate for the same reason that they could not import—namely, the overwhelming superiority of the British and French fleets—they must needs have recourse to the use of the submarine with all the consequences which the nature of that craft entailed. The United States Government retorted that it was not responsible for the limited power of the German navy, nor for the geographical position of Germany. The sinking of its ships and the slaughter of its citizens were outrages to which they could not submit. Such provocations were radically different from the use of British naval power to enforce search in ways of which America had complained.

The interchange of expostulation and counter-charge was renewed at every successive stage of the controversy. It did not differ in any essential at any date. We shall not be forestalling the course of events if we quote two characteristic statements of the contending Governments, which were made in April and May of 1916. The text in their case was the torpedoing of the *Sussex* on March 24, 1916. The United States Government summed its case up as follows:—

"Neutral ships, even neutral ships *en route* from neutral port to neutral port, have been destroyed, just as hostile ships, in steadily increasing number. Attacked merchantmen have sometimes been warned

and challenged to surrender before being fired on or torpedoed; sometimes the most scanty security has been granted to their passengers and crews of being allowed to enter boats before the ship was sunk; but repeatedly no warning has been given, and not even refuge in boats was granted to the passengers on board great ships like the *Lusitania* and the *Arabic*, and pure passenger boats, like the *Sussex*, have been attacked without any warning, often before they were aware they were in the presence of an armed enemy ship, and the life of non-combatants, passengers, and crews was indiscriminately destroyed in a manner which the Government of the United States could only regard as wanton, and lacking in every justification. Indeed, no sort of limit was set to the further indiscriminate destruction of merchantmen of every kind and nationality outside the waters which the Imperial Government has been pleased to indicate as within the war zone. The list of Americans who lost their lives on the vessels thus attacked and destroyed has increased month by month until the terrible number of the victims has risen to hundreds."

In the face of this record the least the United States Government could do was to end by saying that unless its protests were listened to it could "have no other choice than to break off completely diplomatic relations" with Germany. The reply of the German Government was in substance an uncompromising refusal, very slightly modified by apparent concessions, but embittered by taunts. The capital passage ran:—

"In self defence against the illegal conduct of British warfare, while fighting in a bitter struggle for national existence, Germany had to resort to the hard but effective weapon of submarine warfare. As matters stand, the German Government

cannot but reiterate its regret that sentiments of humanity, which the Government of the United States extends with such fervour to the unhappy victims of submarine warfare, have not been extended with the same feeling to the many millions of women and children, who, according to the avowed intention of the British Government, are to be starved, and who by suffering are to force the victorious armies of the Central Powers into an ignominious capitulation."¹

"The German Government, in agreement with the German people, fails to understand this discrimination, all the more as it has repeatedly and explicitly declared itself ready to use the submarine weapon in strict conformity with the rules of International Law as recognized before the outbreak of war, if Great Britain is otherwise ready to adapt her conduct of the war to these rules. . . . The German people knows that the Government of the United States has the power to confine war to the armed forces of the belligerent countries in the interests of humanity and the maintenance of International Law. . . . But as matters stand, the German people is under the impression that the Government of the United States, while demanding that Germany, who is struggling for her existence, shall restrain the use of her effective weapon, and while making compliance with these demands the condition for the maintenance of relations with Germany, confines herself to protests against the illegal methods adopted by Germany's enemies. Moreover, the German people knows to what considerable extent her enemies are supplied with all kinds of war materials from the United States."

The German Press went beyond the by no means narrow limits of the Government's diplomatic taunts, and roundly accused the Americans of

¹ Observe that the Central Powers had no scruple in forcing an "ignominious capitulation" on Montenegro by this very form of pressure.

pure hypocrisy. The seeming concessions of the Imperial Government amounted to no more than a promise that it would restrain its submarines if the United States would put effective pressure on Great Britain to make her conform her use of her fleet to German interpretations of International Law. It firmly refused to accept President Wilson's doctrine that the use of submarines for the destruction of the enemy's commerce should be given up

West, to which he was to owe his re-election in the autumn. But more influence ought to be allowed to the fact that the German Government had not yet carried out the great scheme of submarine construction and development to which it had begun to turn its attention in 1915, and was not therefore ready to impose its will. So soon as it was ready the crisis came quickly and automatically. When the points at issue and the spirit of the

two parties have been made clear, the mere events which led to the final rupture may be briefly recorded.

There was a marked similarity in the events themselves. Germany did not abstain from injuring American ships and causing the loss of American lives. Neither did Austria, within her narrow



One of America's Battleships: the *New York*

as "completely irreconcilable with the principles of humanity, with the long-existing, undisputed rights of neutrals, and the sacred privileges of non-combatants".

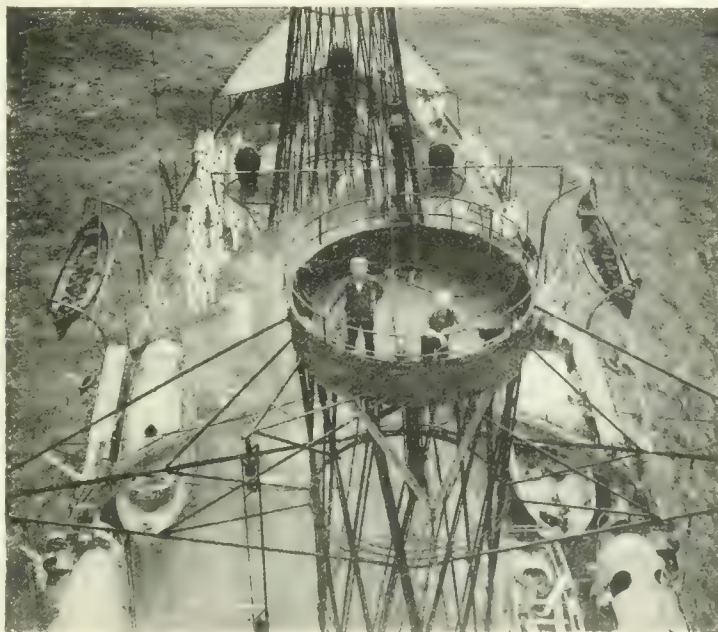
After such an exchange of views, and in face of the dogged determination of Germany not to part with its "effective weapon", the wonder would seem to be that relations were not broken off in the spring of 1916. The explanation of the delay may be found in part in the conditions of American politics, the great prosperity of the country, and the strength of the love of peace, particularly in Mr. Wilson's own Democratic Party and in the

limits, but both were ready to offer excuses and give assurances. Where the case was very clear, and the alternative was a rupture, Germany would pay damages. She did so promptly when the United States demanded satisfaction for the loss of the *William P. Frye*, destroyed by the *Eitel Friedrich*. But at the very time when this concession was made she was pushing the submarine war without pity or stint. Nor did she make any disguise of her intention. On May 1, 1915, the German Embassy issued a warning to American travellers to avoid British liners. This was exactly one week before the *Lusitania* was

torpedoed and sent down on the coast of Ireland.¹ This audacious, or as it may fairly be called, flaunting disregard of American opinion and interests, produced a profound impression. Mr. Wilson protested vehemently, and included the cases of the *Falaba*, the *Cushing*, the *Gulflight*, which had been torpedoed or sunk by bomb on March 28, April 28, and May 1 respectively. Germany adhered to her chosen method. She endeavoured to justify the sinking of the *Lusitania* on the ground that the vessel was an auxiliary cruiser. She had been built with the help of a subvention from Government to be used for that purpose, but was not so employed. Charges of carrying explosives contrary to the law of the United States were also brought against her.

When Mr. Wilson grew more pressing Germany grew evasive, and found new aspects of the matter to discuss, new distinctions to be made. She paid damages for the *Gulflight*, but pleaded lack of evidence as to her responsibility for not paying in the case of the *Cushing*. Much was said of the allowance which must be made

for the changes in the methods of naval warfare due to the unprecedented character of the submarine. Proposals were offered for understandings as to ways of securing the safety of Americans. They all implied that the United States must concede the principle of the German claims. By the dexterous



On a U. S. Warship: the spotting and signalling station at the head of the steel lattice mast

It is claimed for the steel lattice mast—a characteristic feature of United States warships—that they will stand shell fire longer than a hollow steel pole.

use of diplomatic evasions a rupture was, for the time being, avoided.

On August 19, 1915, took place the sinking of the *Arabic*, a White Star Liner outward bound from Liverpool to New York. This incident appeared for a moment to render a rupture inevitable. But the story of the discussion in the case of the *Lusitania* was repeated. Count Bernstorff hastened to implore the American

¹ Cf. Volume III, Chapter X. The details of these destructions are dealt with in the narrative of the naval operations.

Government not to hurry to an unfavourable conclusion before hearing the German case. And he was ready to say with confidence that "if Americans should actually have lost their lives this would naturally be contrary to our intentions; the German Government would deeply regret the fact, and begs to tender sincerest sympathy to the American Government".

The exchange of views ended consistently enough in an assurance from the German Government that its submarine commanders should always give fair warning to liners, and provide for the safety of passengers. The engagement had just as much value as it could derive from the word of a Government which holds that all promises are to be kept, and all treaties to be observed, *rebus sic stantibus*, that is to say, so long as the circumstances make it convenient to keep and observe them. It was accepted, however, as a triumph for American diplomacy. In this case Germany again paid an indemnity for the loss of American lives. The sinking of the *Ancona*, near Cape Carbonara, in the Mediterranean, on November 7, led to renewal of a similar discussion, in which the Austrian Government took the place of the German.

Though the parties had been so often brought to the verge of a final rupture, the breaking off of diplomatic relations was delayed for more than a year. "Friendly relations" survived even the torpedoing of the *Sussex* in the British Channel on March 24, 1916. Twenty-five American lives were lost, and the breach of the promise made after the sinking of the *Arabic* was

peculiarly flagrant, for the *Sussex* was well known to be purely a passenger boat. The passages already quoted from the correspondence which was now exchanged render it superfluous to say more on the subject now. Even this example of German ruthlessness did not provoke the United States to break off relations. The matter was smoothed over as others had been. Mr. Wilson, whose authority had been immensely increased by his victory in the autumn of 1915 over his Republican competitor, Mr. Hughes, had every reason to believe that the country would support him, but he was manifestly desirous to make it perfectly clear to all Americans that he did not relinquish the hope of preserving peace till Germany left him no choice. He waited for the "overt act" which should remove all shadow of doubt.

It came at the end of January, 1917, when Germany, having now completed her preparations, and being certainly well aware that a crisis was approaching in Russia which could not fail to be to her advantage, threw off all disguise. She let the whole world know that she would henceforth impose no limit on the employment of her submarines. From February, 1, 1917, they were to be expected to sink any vessel, Allied or neutral, found in British waters and the Mediterranean, except on a few narrow paths which in no case led to the British Isles or a British possession. An offer was indeed made to allow a select number of American ships to reach a western British port under German supervision.

No self-respecting country could have accepted the insulting offer. On

February 3, diplomatic relations ceased between the United States and Germany. The declaration of war, which could in no case have failed to follow, was held back till April 2, when the President asked Congress to vote that a state of war existed. In the interval, the torpedoing of the Cunard steamer *Laconia*, with further loss of American and British lives on February 25, had shown that the German threat was no idle form. It was the "overt act" which Mr. Wilson said he would wait for. On March 4 the House of Representatives passed his resolution to arm American merchant ships for their own defence. As Germany had long announced that she would treat armed merchantmen as men-of-war, this was a definitely belligerent act. The final recognition of the existence of a state of war was mainly a formality. With it began a new phase in the world-wide struggle. The discovery at the beginning of March that Germany had been intriguing to bring Mexico into the war had served to harden American opinion rather than to produce the final breach of peaceful relations.

Though America was driven to take part in the war by attacks on the lives and property of its citizens, it aimed at far more than repelling insult and injury. It became a belligerent with a settled purpose to obtain security for the future. Mr. Wilson, who had throughout been the spokesman of the nation, had been emphatic from the first in declaring that the Republic would fight with the determination to establish a new and a better order among all the nations of the earth.

The spirit which animated him, and all other Americans, was stated with lucidity and force, as well as with a most comprehensive survey of all the elements of a very complicated question, in his address to Congress on January 8, 1918. Mr. Wilson went beyond a statement of particular measures or material conditions on which a lasting peace could be settled. He mentioned them in detail under the heads of open diplomacy, freedom of navigation, reduction of armaments, the evacuation of Russia and Belgium, the restoration of Alsace-Lorraine, the readjustment of frontiers and of sovereignty to bring them into harmony with national aspirations, and many more. But the whole was illuminated by his guiding principle, that the ultimate goal of the Allies must be "an association of nations affording guarantees of political and territorial independence for all States".

From the day on which the United States took the final step to active participation in the war, it became a peremptory necessity for the Powers concerned to co-ordinate their efforts. The development of modern means of communication has allowed of much more direct personal communication between rulers than was formerly possible. It was natural that the British Empire and the French Republic should take steps to secure a larger measure of representation in the States than could be obtained by the ordinary diplomatic channels. The first sent Mr. A. J. Balfour, and the second Marshal Joffre, to speak for them and to take counsel with Mr. Wilson's administration.



The British Mission's Arrival in America: Mr. Balfour surveys modern New York

Both were admirably received. Mr. Balfour travelled widely in the States and Canada, and spoke with effect, even on one occasion in the House of Representatives. The results of his mission were summed up by himself in his farewell speech:—

"I am quite confident", he said, "that Congress will not refuse the President and the Government all the powers, great as they are, which are absolutely necessary if the war is to be successfully pursued. I am not only persuaded that it will give these powers, but I am persuaded that when these powers are given they will be used to the utmost, and with as little delay as the imperfections of human institutions and of human beings will allow, to throw the great, and I believe, the decisive, weight of America to the full extent into the great contest. In that belief I shall leave these shores. In that belief I shall make my report to the Allied Governments, as far as I can reach them, on the other side of the Atlantic; and in that belief I look for-

ward with cheerful confidence to the days, which will undoubtedly be days of trial and difficulty, but beyond which we surely can see the dawn of a happier day, coming not merely to the kindred communities to which we belong, but to all mankind, and all nations which love liberty and pursue righteousness."

Marshal Joffre was less able to speak in public than Mr. Balfour. There was a peculiar appropriateness in his presence at the unveiling of the monument to Lafayette shortly after his arrival. This reminiscence of an ancient alliance can be accepted with nothing but friendly feeling on our part. We, as well as France, are allied to America in "a struggle for the liberty of civilization and humanity".

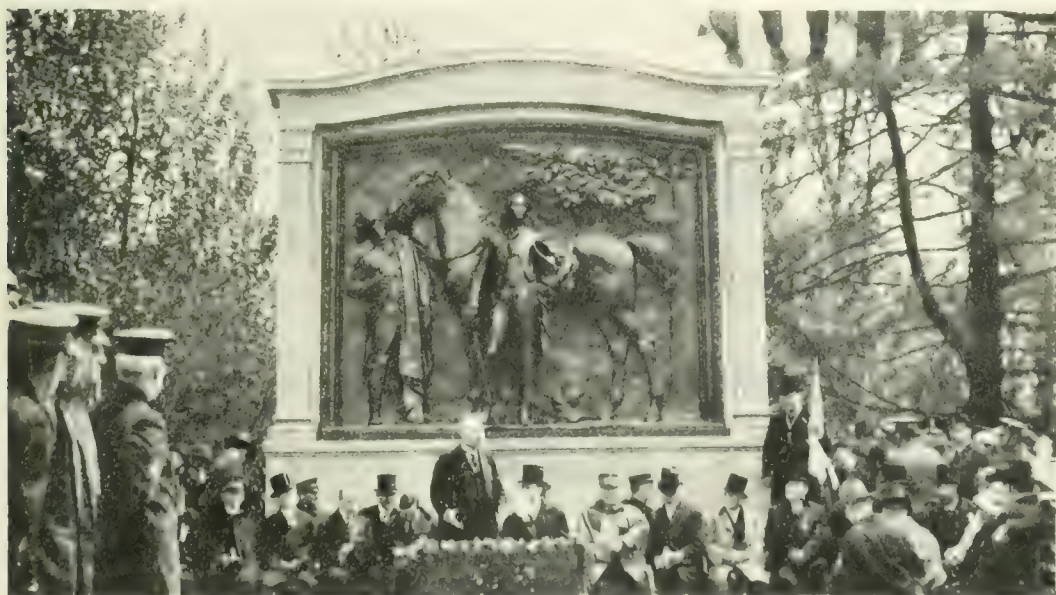
American diplomatists, administrators, naval and military officers—all under the direction of Mr. Wilson, whose name has been foremost in this

chapter—had in some cases been helpful to the Allies before February, 1917. Mr. Gerard had given help and protection to British subjects and prisoners of war in Germany, in the days before he left Berlin in the circumstances vividly described by himself,¹ as American ambassador in the German capital, in charge of the interest of British subjects and prisoners of war, as well as negotiator for the United States. Duties which would in no case have been easy had been rendered almost intolerably difficult by the asperity of the German spirit and manners. Mr. Lansing, Secretary of State, had been on the side of President Wilson from the time when Mr. Bryan retired from that office—that is to say, from the day when it began to seem probable that war would be

the end of German aggressions on American shipping.

Admiral Mayo, the Commander-in-Chief of the American Atlantic Fleet, was the officer to whom it naturally fell to prepare for the direct participation of the naval forces of the States in the war. His mission to Europe in the autumn of 1917 was spent in consultations and arrangements from which action was to result. Vice-Admiral Sims, who, as he was born in Canada, has a direct connection with the British Empire, may be said to have occupied a position for which there was absolutely no precedent. No foreign naval officer had ever held the command, not only over his own, but also over British ships, on the coast of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. Admiral Sims did hold that command when he was stationed by his own government on

¹ *My Four Years in Germany, 1917; Face to Face with Kaiserism*, 1918.



The French Mission in America: Marshal Joffre at the Lafayette celebration at Brooklyn (seated on the speaker's left) after unveiling the statue of Washington's French Ally in the War of Independence.



Mr. James W. Gerard, United States Ambassador to Germany, 1914-17

the coast of Ireland with the destroyer squadron "for the protection of trade". In June, 1917, the station was transferred to him by the British Government when Vice-Admiral Bayley went on sick leave. Vice-Admiral Sims, who was especially promoted by Mr. Wilson for this service, was already familiar with European navies in the capacity of naval attaché at Paris and in Russia.

The nature of the war, in which armies, though certainly not more important, are more prominent than navies, gives the foremost place among American officers to General Pershing, appointed to the command of the American Expeditionary Force. The career of the general is by itself an example of the great change which has come to the position of the United States in the world during the present

generation. Much of his service has been performed in the Philippines—that is to say, in a dominion conquered by American arms overseas. The distinction he gained at West Point would once have led only to a command in the Indian reservations. It was now the starting-point for the leadership of an army which rapidly reached proportions hitherto unheard of in America, and promised, in Mr. Balfour's words, to throw the decisive weight into the final struggle on the soil of France.

The resources at the disposal of the United States in April, 1917, were such as to promise future rather than immediate aid to the Allies. For two generations past it had been economically convenient for the Americans to apply their energy and their capital



Admiral Sims, commanding the United States Naval Force in European Waters
From a photograph by Sarony



Admiral Mayo, commanding the United States Atlantic Squadron
(From a photograph by Pach New York)

(technically so-called) between the Atlantic and Pacific seabords were not sufficiently numerous to meet the demands made on them. The decline, it must not be forgotten, was relative. If tonnage only is considered, there was no fall from the standard of the years in which the famous clippers were at the height of their prosperity; not, at any rate, if the lake shipping is taken into account.

Mr. Wilson had long shown himself to be much preoccupied by anxiety to promote the development of American shipping. From the beginning of the war he had used all his influence to persuade Congress to supply the means of fostering native shipbuilding by means of subventions. But he had been vigorously opposed by the Republicans, and not effectually backed up by the Democrats. Nothing had come of his efforts.

The war stimulated American shipbuilding in a very natural way. European shipowners, who were hampered by lack of labour in the yards, came to America for what they could not obtain at home. In the early days of 1917 it was known that 2,000,000 tons of shipping were either in course of construction or contracted for on behalf of European owners. As they were at once taken over by the Americans, they of themselves represented no small addition to the national shipping. Yet they were no addition to the general resources of the Allies. As the economic causes referred to above had led to a decline of American shipbuilding from the relative position it had held in the middle of the nineteenth century, it was neces-

to the development of their land and manufactures, while leaving the carriage of their imports, and, what was more considerable still, their exports, to foreign, and in particular to British, enterprise. As naval aid was that kind of reinforcement of which the Allies stood least in need, we can overlook the United States navy for a few sentences. But they did stand in great need of transport, and this America was not able to afford on a scale proportionate to its wealth and population. The bulk of American steam tonnage was large—the largest in the world next to that of Great Britain (4,854,748 tons in 1914), but a large part of it was adapted for lake navigation only, and was hardly fit for ocean traffic. The ocean-going vessels engaged in coasting voyages

sary to begin by the construction of shipbuilding yards. The great development which followed the entry of the United States into the war is a subject for future, rather than for present, treatment.

Political necessities had made it incumbent on the United States not to allow its navy to suffer the same

Dewey, he who destroyed the Spanish squadron at Manilla in 1898. He and those who agreed with him would have persuaded their countrymen, if they could, to insist on the adoption of a building scheme which would have given the States a navy equal to the largest in the world—that is to say, to the British navy.



The Call to Arms in the United States—the National Guard leaving for its training camp after mobilization

relative decline as its merchant shipping. Yet the armed sea forces of the republic were by no means in proportion to the resources and the position of the country. The war brought home to many Americans, who had hitherto been somewhat indifferent, a sense of the necessity for an increase of their navy. Many among them would have promoted a building scheme on a great scale. The foremost among the advocates of a vigorous policy was the late Admiral

In the year 1915 Americans were not prepared to go quite so far. Yet it was well understood that an increase had become necessary. The scheme actually adopted by Mr. Daniels, Secretary for the Navy, was on a more moderate scale than Admiral Dewey's. In December, 1915, he published a building programme, to be completed by 1921. It provided for the construction of twenty-seven battleships of the first class, and a number of less powerful vessels, including battle-

cruisers, which would, in all, amount to 382. It is obvious that a scheme which was drawn up at the end of 1915 could only begin to be put into operation in 1916, and could have made no great progress by the first quarter of 1917. Yet the navy actually at the disposal of the United States when war began was amply capable of covering the transports and trading ships to Europe. In view of the prevailing superiority of the Allies at sea this was sufficient.

There can be no question that the power of the Americans to supply themselves with ships was limited by their command of money and labour alone. The supply of both was immense. But the United States suffered from a certain difficulty in manning their ships. The economical causes which militated against the growth of American shipping had no less tended to limit the increase of a maritime population. It had been found necessary to train a special class of man-of-war sailors by engaging "apprentices". An identical course had been taken by Great Britain and other European nations. But the high rate of wages, the abundance of employment, and the reluctance of the people to submit to the restrictions of a disciplined service had rendered the task of recruiting boys to be trained far harder in the New World than in the Old. In December, 1915, Mr. Daniels had to confess that the navy stood in need of an addition of 11,500 men, apprentices and marines. And if that was the case when the naval forces of the republic were still on a lower footing it was still more true

when war began. The increase was then rapid, but it belongs to the period following the declaration of war. It was inevitable that an interval must pass before the resources of the United States could come into full play.

The American army need not be mentioned here, for the adequate reason that, in so far as it represented



Mr. Joseph Daniels, Secretary for the United States Navy

an expeditionary force for use in Europe, it began to be collected and trained only after war was declared.

The Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking republics of America, north and south, were affected by the struggle and were mostly drawn to the side of the Allies by German aggression. Nothing need be said of the chronic anarchy officially known as the Republic of Mexico. Nor did the internal condition of the others allow of any

active participation in the war save on a very small scale. When the Republic of Bolivia broke off diplomatic relations with Germany, the event was, of necessity, of little external consequence. Brazil and the Argentine were on a different footing. Both suffered at the hands of the Germans, and the first declared war. The Argentine had particularly to complain of German diplomatic agents who did not scruple to recommend

that ships carrying its flag should be sunk without trace—sent down, in fact, with all hands. The good wishes of these countries could not but go to the Allies, and their co-operation within the limits of their strength was valuable indirectly. But in their case it was peculiarly true that the share they could take in the general task of repelling German aggression must be performed in the future.

D. H.



Commander-in-Chief of the American Expeditionary Force: Major General J. G. Pershing (with Lieutenant-General Pittman Campbell on his left) inspecting the British Guard of Honour on his arrival at Liverpool on June 8, 1917

CHAPTER IV

WITH MAUDE TO BAGDAD

(August, 1916—March, 1917)

Effect of the Fall of Kut—The Mesopotamia Report—Preparations for the New Campaign—Sir Percy Lake's Successor—Turco-German Designs in the East—Sir Stanley Maude's Plan to thwart them—His Right-hand Men—The Advance resumed—Seizing the Hai Salient—Clearing the Khadaira and Dahra Bends—Forcing the Tigris above Kut—Fall of the Sanna-i-Yat Position—Recapture of Kut—The Navy joins in the Chase—Heavy Fighting at Close Quarters—Recapture of the *Firefly* and Other Craft—The Pursuit to Bagdad—Forcing the Dialah—Heroic Loyal North Lancashires—Entry into Bagdad—Sir Stanley Maude in Possession.

GENERAL TOWNSHEND and his heroic garrison at Kut, the story of whose tragic surrender brought our last Mesopotamian chapter to a close,¹ were fully avenged when Sir Stanley Maude, after assuming supreme command in the Tigris valley, and reorganizing the Expeditionary Force, led it once more on its interrupted career of victory. The set-back to the first advance on Bagdad—an advance which, in the words of the report of the subsequent Mesopotamia Commission, "was based upon political and military miscalculations, and attempted with tired and insufficient forces and inadequate preparations"—had been a bitter blow to British pride, and its military results sufficiently serious in the surrender of more than a division of our finest fighting troops, together with the casualties, amounting to 23,000 men, incurred in the ineffective attempts to relieve Kut. The loss of prestige associated with these military failures, however, was less than might have been anticipated, "owing", again to quote from the report of the Mesopo-

tamia Commission, "to the deep impression made, throughout and beyond the localities where the combats occurred, by the splendid fighting power of the British and Indian forces engaged".

Discussion of all the painful disclosures in the Report of this Commission lies outside the scope of our narrative, but some reference must be made to its conclusions for the vivid light which they throw on the earlier chapters of the campaign. The Commission itself, presided over by Lord George Hamilton, had been appointed to enquire into the responsibility, not only for the military disaster, but also for the scandalous breakdown of the Indian Medical Service, which had been the cause of untold suffering to our sick and wounded troops. The full horror of that breakdown was not known until the publication of the report of the Vincent-Bingley Commission, sent from India, as stated in an earlier chapter,² to enquire into the matter in the spring of 1916. This document fully confirmed Sir Alfred Keogh's opinion that "the medical

¹ Vol. VI, Chapter I.

² Vol. V, p. 38.

arrangements connected with the army in India had been for years and years most disgraceful”.

Though there had been a certain amount of needless suffering among the wounded in the earlier stages of the operations, it was not until after the Ctesiphon battle, with its sequel in the siege and fall of Kut, that the complete collapse occurred which caused the worst of the scandals. Unworthy attempts had been made by the authorities to conceal these medical deficiencies, and it was in no small measure due to the dogged determination of an Indian medical officer, Major R. M. Carter—who, in the face of official rebuffs, described mercilessly to the Indian Government the disgraceful state of affairs then existing—that adequate reforms were gradually introduced. In the report of the Mesopotamia Commission the heads of the Indian Medical Service were severely criticized for grave faults in administration, but blame was also attached to the Indian Government, both on this account and in regard to all the transport defects. “It is impossible”, write the Commissioners, “to refrain from serious censure of the Indian Government for the lack of knowledge and foresight shown in the inadequacy of their preparations, and for the lack of readiness to recognize and supply deficiencies.” Every general who gave evidence before the Commission bore witness to the fact that the Expeditionary Force had been ill-equipped throughout. The root of this was found in the old policy of economy continued by the Viceroy and the

Finance member, Sir William Meyer, as a result of which the Indian army for years before the war had been deliberately restricted to the needs of frontier warfare.

Responsibility for the military failure was apportioned in the following order: Sir John Nixon, “whose confident optimism was the main cause of the decision to advance”; Lord Hardinge, the Viceroy; Sir Beauchamp Duff, the Commander-in-Chief in India; Sir Edmund Barrow, Military Secretary to the India Office; Mr. Austen Chamberlain, the Secretary of State for India; and the War Committee of the Cabinet. In considering this judgment it is fair also to remember, with the Commissioners, “that the Mesopotamian Expedition was only part of a larger effort, which involved, not only the maintenance in India of a considerable army for interior and frontier defence, but also the dispatch overseas of troops approximating in number to the total army maintained in India before the war”.

The Report was fully debated in both Houses of Parliament, Mr. Austen Chamberlain announcing his resignation as Secretary of State for India before explaining his share in the affair. Lord Hardinge, who had meantime resumed his office as Permanent Secretary to the Foreign Office on returning from the Viceroyalty, and was stoutly defended by his new chief, Mr. Balfour, made a long personal defence in the House of Lords, and the Government declined to accept his resignation, though he twice pressed this upon them. The soldiers implicated in the Report were left to

receive judgment at the hands of the Army Council, and it was while preparing his full defence of the allegations brought against him that the late Commander-in-Chief in India, Sir Beauchamp Duff, died from an overdose of veronal—due, it was found at the subsequent inquest, to misadventure.



Lieutenant-General Sir F. Stanley Maude, Commander-in-Chief in Mesopotamia
(From a photograph by Maull & Fox)

The Mesopotamia Report was not published until the end of June, 1917, by which time Sir Stanley Maude, who was to benefit by all the tragic lessons learned in the earlier operations, had already retrieved the melancholy failure of the first advance to Bagdad. A long interval was allowed to elapse, however, after Townshend's army had been starved into surrender in April, 1916. Several changes of command took place during the ensuing spring

and summer, and firm foundations were laid for the next campaign by the development of railways and other work, for which General Maude accorded his predecessor, Sir Percy Lake, due acknowledgement in his first dispatch. During this period of preparation, little but desultory warfare had taken place, with intermittent artillery and aerial activity, the only vital change in the position after the fall of Kut being the evacuation of the Es Sinn position by the Turks in May, when they withdrew their line on the right bank of the Tigris. The British Force at that time, as General Lake explained in his last dispatch, was unable to take advantage of this evacuation, sickness and overpowering heat, together with the necessity of building new roads and reorganizing supply, preventing anything in the nature of a hasty move. It was not until General Maude assumed command in the following August that the new chapter was really begun in the history of the Mesopotamian advance.

Sir Percy Lake's successor had made his mark in the war before he redeemed the prestige of our arms in the East. The son of the late General Sir F. Maude, V.C., he was born in 1864, and came of a famous fighting family. He served with the Coldstreams in the Soudan Expedition of 1885, and as Brigade-Major of one of the Brigades of Guards through the South African War. He was still holding colonel's rank in August, 1914, and the declaration of war found him on the General Staff of the War Office. Rapidly distinguishing him-

self in the first winter campaign—in which he was wounded—he became successively Brigadier-General, commanding the 14th Infantry Brigade, and Major-General, commanding the 33rd Division, and afterwards the 13th Division, which he led with un-availing ability in the abortive attempt

ization, his indefatigable energy, and personal energy and influence, he not only overcame all difficulties which had hitherto paralysed our efforts, but raised to the highest pitch the fighting spirit and enthusiasm of his men. He then led his armies to a series of victories that thwarted the enemy's ambitions, and safeguarded our position in the East."

How serious that position might have been but for this brilliant series of triumphs was disclosed in General Maude's first dispatch, in which he made it clear that while the enemy was striving to contain our main forces on the Tigris, his real object was to conduct a vigorous campaign in Persia which would directly threaten India. It was evident, too, that he was preparing a dangerous move down the Euphrates towards Nasariyeh, which we had captured in the earlier phases of the war. General Maude saw at once that the true solution to the problem was not to disseminate our troops in order to safeguard the various conflicting interests involved, but to launch as speedily as possible an overwhelming offensive with concentrated forces on the Tigris. This would at once threaten Bagdad, the centre of all the Turko-German activities in the East, and a successful stroke in that direction would automatically relieve the pressure both in Persia and on the Euphrates. Another principal object of the new campaign, as disclosed in the War Cabinet's Report for 1917, was to assist a projected Russian offensive on Mosul and Bagdad in the early spring of that year by containing as many enemy troops, and inflicting



Photo. by I. J. C. Ltd. War Records

Guarding the Lines of Communication in Mesopotamia

to relieve Kut earlier in the year. In every step he took he proved himself a born leader of men, and a commander of the highest rank. His great opportunity came in Mesopotamia, as Mr. Lloyd George afterwards said, in a moving tribute to his memory, "at a time when our arms were still under the stigma of the failure at Kut, and the breakdown of our transport organization; but by his power of organ-

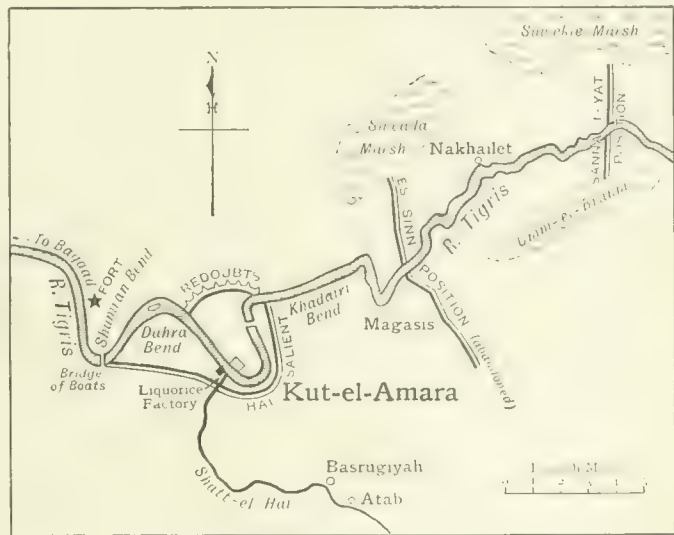
as heavy losses on them, as possible. It does not seem to have been imagined, in the original plan, that Sir Stanley Maude would himself reach Bagdad in the course of these operations.

The first three and a half months of the new command were absorbed in preparations. The laying of railways was completed, and the Directorate of Inland Water Transport created, an organization which so overcame the obstacles that had helped to wreck the previous operations that when the period for action began, in December, an endless chain of river-craft passed up and down the Tigris night and day, thereby assuring the maintenance of the troops at the front. The war training of the troops was also improved; hospital accommodation still further expanded; nothing, in short, was left un-

done to prevent a repetition of former disasters before the first move was made in the new advance. General Sir Charles Monro, who had just succeeded Sir Beauchamp Duff as Commander-in-Chief in India, paid a personal visit to the reorganized Expeditionary Force. "The army", wrote Sir Stanley Maude, "hailed his visit with lively satisfaction, feeling that he would assume office with first-hand and sympathetic knowledge of our needs and difficulties."

By December 12, 1916, everything

was ready for the resumption of active operations. The enemy still held the strong positions which he had occupied throughout the summer. On the left or northern bank, some 16 miles east of Kut, he held Sanna-i-Yat—flanked on one side by the Suwekie Marsh, and on the other by the river—from which we had vainly endeavoured to



Map illustrating the Approximate Positions of the Main Turkish Defences
at Kut before Sir Stanley Maude's Advance

hurl him on three successive occasions during the previous April. Here we were still facing him within 120 yards of his front line. On the right, or southern, bank the Turks were now holding the line on the Hai (Shatt-el-Hai), to which they had withdrawn in May when, as already stated, they evacuated the Es Sinn position. This line, shown, with the other positions, on the accompanying map, extended from the Tigris, 3 miles north-east of Kut, across the Khadairi Bend, to the River Hai, 2 miles below its

exit from the Tigris, and thence across the Hai—the old bed of the Tigris, linking up with the Euphrates at Nasariyeh, 100 miles to the south. To the north-west of this, on the same bank of the Tigris, our troops were established about 11 miles upstream of Sanna-i-Yat, with advance posts at about 2 miles from those of the Turks opposite the Khadairi Bend, and some 5 miles from its position on the Hai. A light railway across the desert from Sheikh Said had now been constructed for the maintenance of the British force on this bank.

Strategically, we were better situated than the enemy. His abandonment of the southern bank left him with his communications on the opposite side in prolongation of his battle front, and the defeat of his forces on the Hai would at once expose those communications to our attack. Our own communications, on the other hand, were protected not only by the Suwekie Marsh, which at the same time protected the northern flank of the Turks' position, but also by the sounder disposition of our troops. It was a position offering opportunities for successful strategy of which General Maude availed himself to the full. The recapture of Kut two months later was the result of a methodical, well-planned scheme, which, in spite of an occasional hitch here and there, completely transformed the whole military situation in Mesopotamia. It dealt the enemy a series of stinging blows which set him reeling, not only from Kut, but beyond Bagdad itself, and, for the time at least, entirely upset the Turco-German calculations throughout the East.

In the space at our disposal it is impossible to follow all the varying phases of the struggle on both banks of the river, but, briefly put, the scheme for the recapture of Kut was first to secure possession of the Hai, and then, having cleared the Khadairi and Dahra Bends, east and west of that town, and sapped the enemy's strength



Lieutenant-General Sir W. R. Marshall
(From a photograph by Elliott & Fry)

by constant attacks, to force him to give up the Sanna-i-Yat position, the atrocious strength of which Sir Stanley Maude knew from the bitter experience gained while leading his own 13th Division against it in the previous April.

In his present task of turning the tables on the same battle-field the new Commander-in-Chief had found the right men to support him in his two subordinate commanders, Lieutenant-

General Sir A. S. Cobbe, V.C., D.S.O., and Lieutenant-General Sir W. R. Marshall. Lieutenant-General Cobbe, the son of the late Lieutenant-General Sir A. H. Cobbe, was a veteran of the Chitral Field Force and of several of our little wars in Africa, winning his V.C. in Somaliland, and his D.S.O. in Ashanti, when he was severely wounded. He was now holding the enemy on the northern bank of the Tigris in those formidable lines at Sanna-i-Yat—strengthened and elaborated since our unsuccessful assaults nine months before with a series of other strong positions, extending as far back as Kut itself, some 16 miles in the rear.

Lieutenant-General Marshall, destined in due course to succeed Sir Stanley Maude, had won for himself a high reputation for cool determination and imperturbable courage. Years before, he had seen much fighting on the North-West Frontier, and he served throughout the South African campaign. He now commanded the advancing force some 7 miles from Kut on the southern bank of the Tigris, his first object being to secure a firm position on the Hai by a surprise march under cover of a feint attack by General Cobbe at Sanna-i-Yat. It was a ruse that had been tried before, and on the same battle-field, but never with more complete success than on this occasion. While General Cobbe was hammering at the Turkish defences miles away on the opposite bank, General Marshall's forcemarched westward through the night of December 13-14, and, reaching the Hai at 6 a.m., caught the Turks napping.

As usual at this time of year the river was so low that the cavalry crossed without difficulty, and at once set to work to clear the opposite bank, while our infantry, elated at being in action again after the long months of waiting and training, established themselves on the eastern bank towards Kut, pivoting on their right. Thus the first of General Maude's objectives had been reached without serious opposition. The remainder of the month, and the turn of the year, were spent in consolidating the captured ground, and harassing the enemy's communications west of Shumran, about 5 miles up river from Kut.

The next and sterner task was to clear the Turkish force still holding the Khadairi Bend on the western side of Kut. Here the enemy maintained communication with the northern bank by means of ferries, which, owing to the conformation of the river bend, were protected from direct rifle-fire and machine-gun fire as long as the last position was held. It fell to General Cobbe's troops to clear him out, but not until after a fortnight of fierce attacks and counter-attacks, mainly in hand-to-hand fighting, was he forced to give up his last foothold on the Khadairi Bend. The Manchesters, Gurkhas, Mahrattas, Sikhs, and Yats were singled out by General Maude for their share in all this stubborn fighting, in which the Turks, to their credit be it recorded, gallantly contested every inch of ground, and sold their lives dearly.

While General Cobbe was thus clearing the Khadairi Bend, General Marshall was preparing to advance

on the enemy's main position south of Kut—the Hai salient, an extensive trench system affording the Turks every opportunity of enfilading our approach and organizing counter-attacks. Floods and heavy thunderstorms added to the hardships of a struggle at this point which was not finally decided in our favour until February 5, after a series of violent hand-to-hand encounters, in which the magnificent fighting qualities of our troops, as testified by Sir Stanley Maude, “were well seconded by the bold support rendered by the artillery and by the ceaseless work carried out by the Royal Flying Corps”. On one occasion a dangerous situation was only restored by a gallant charge across the open by the Royal Warwicks, other troops mentioned for their share in thus reducing the Turks’ fast-vanishing hold on the southern bank of the Tigris being the Devons, the Cheshires, and battalions of Punjabis, Sikhs, and Gurkhas.

On this bank the enemy had now fallen back to the fortified liquorice factory opposite Kut—held as a detached post by General Townshend during the siege of the town—and to a line east and west across the Dahra Bend, beyond Kut. To attack this position, described by the Commander-in-Chief as a horseshoe bend bristling with trenches and commanded by machine-guns, called for offensive qualities of the highest order. It was the knowledge of its strength which still kept the Turks on the opposite bank clinging to their trenches at Sanna-i-Yat, a day’s march away on the other side of Kut. Regarding the

Dahra Bend, like their own position, as impregnable, they risked the increasing danger to their long, exposed line of communications on their rear. But the Dahra Bend, like the Hai salient, was not proof against the new attack, backed as it was by the close and ever-present support of the artillery. The liquorice factory was dealt with by howitzer and machine-gun fire before the Buffs and Gurkhas, joining hands with the King’s Own on their left, made a dashing advance, which forced the enemy to evacuate that stronghold on February 10. Previously to this, the King’s Own had already effected a lodgment in the centre of the enemy’s main position, the Worcesters meantime establishing a line within 2500 yards of the Tigris on the extreme left. By the 13th the enemy had been completely enclosed in the Dahra Bend, and, while preparations were being made to deal him a crushing blow, every likely ferry point was bombarded to prevent him from slipping across the Tigris at night. The Loyal North Lancashires cleared the way for the final advance on the 15th by capturing a strong point which enfiladed the approaches to the enemy’s right and centre, while a feint attack and bombardment on the extreme left an hour later deceived the Turks into the belief that our main attack would be made on that part of his line. The real blow was delivered shortly afterwards on the right centre, which the Royal Welsh Fusiliers and South Wales Borderers carried in splendid style. A little later the Buffs and Dogras captured the enemy’s left centre, and, pushing

on in a north-easterly direction to the bank of the Tigris, isolated the Turks' extreme left. Here about 1000 of the enemy surrendered, and by nightfall the only resistance in the Dahra Bend came from some trenches in the right rear, covering about a mile of the Tigris bank, from which the survivors were trying to escape across the river.

"It had been intended", writes the Commander-in-Chief, "to clear these remaining trenches by a combined operation during the night, but two companies of a Gurkha battalion, acting on their own initiative, obtained a footing in them and took 98 prisoners. By the morning of the 16th they had completed their task, having taken 264 more prisoners."

An Indian Grenadier battalion was also mentioned for its brilliant share in the operations, which, after two months of strenuous fighting, had now driven the enemy entirely from the right bank of the Tigris in the neighbourhood of Kut. The total number of prisoners taken on the 15th and 16th alone amounted to 2005. It only remained, so far as the present plan of operations was concerned, to join conclusions with the enemy on the opposite bank of the river, where his attenuated front now extended right from Sanna-i-Yat to Shumran, protected all the way by the winding course of the Tigris. The moment was ripe to cross the river from the southern bank as far west as possible, since the successive lines at Sanna-i-Yat, flanked as they were by the Suwekie Marsh, still barred the way along the northern bank.

It was no easy matter, in the face of a resolute enemy, to force the passage

of a river in full flood and 340 yards wide. The only way was to attempt a surprise attack at what seemed the most vulnerable point on the long line of river front, while General Cobbe kept the enemy as busy as possible at Sanna-i-Yat, between 20 and 30 miles away. Here, indeed, he had maintained constant activity throughout the preceding operations. He was now ordered to make a fresh attack on February 17 in strength, while the main assault was being prepared for the passage of the Tigris by General Marshall's force on the other side of Kut. The point selected for this last operation was at the southern end of the Shumran Bend. Here, while the water-logged state of the country and a high flood on the Tigris necessitated a pause, every precaution was taken to conceal the British intention from the enemy, all the movements of guns, and other preparations for the passage of the river, being carried out stealthily under cover of night.

General Cobbe's secondary attack at Sanna-i-Yat on the 17th, heavily hampered by the sodden state of the ground, won the first and second Turkish lines, but failed to hold them, repeated counter-attacks regaining for the enemy his lost ground. The operations had, however, served their purpose, not only in inflicting considerable loss on the Turks, but also in attracting the enemy to the Sanna-i-Yat front. Three days later General Cobbe's attack was renewed, and this time succeeded, after a desperate struggle—in which the brilliant tenacity of the Seaforths throughout the battle called forth special mention in

the official dispatch—in recovering and securing the first two lines of Sanna-i-Yat.

Other feint attacks were delivered on this and the following nights opposite Kut and at Magasis, with the result that the enemy moved infantry and guns into the Kut peninsula, only to discover when the attack developed on the other side of the town that they could not be retransferred in time to the actual point of danger. Thus, when General Marshall's three ferries on the Shumran Bend began to work, just before daybreak on the 23rd, the Norfolks were able to slip across before the enemy awoke to his sudden peril. So complete was the surprise at this spot that 5 machine-guns and some 300 prisoners were captured. The lower ferries were less fortunate, two battalions of Gurkhas being met by a staggering fire before they reached the opposite bank. Nothing daunted, they pressed on, in spite of losses of men and pontoons, and by 7.50 a.m. 150 of them had safely landed. The two lower ferries remained under such heavy machine-gun fire that only the up-stream ferry could now be used until the bridge had been thrown over the river and completed for traffic; but four Gurkha battalions succeeded in forcing the passage before the afternoon was over. All attempts on the enemy's part to counter-attack down the centre of the peninsula were foiled by the quickness and accuracy of our artillery. By 4.30 p.m. the bridge itself was ready for traffic, and by nightfall Sir Stanley Maude was able to record with pride that our troops "by their unconquerable determina-

tion" had secured a firm foothold on the northern bank covering the bridge-head, and some 2000 yards in depth.

If the fate of Kut had been signed before, it was now definitely sealed. While the passage of the river was being won, General Cobbe, in a simultaneous attack, had secured the third and fourth lines at Sanna-i-Yat, the fifth line shortly afterwards being captured by bombing-parties, and when the sixth line followed suit, all opposition before General Cobbe along the left bank crumpled up.

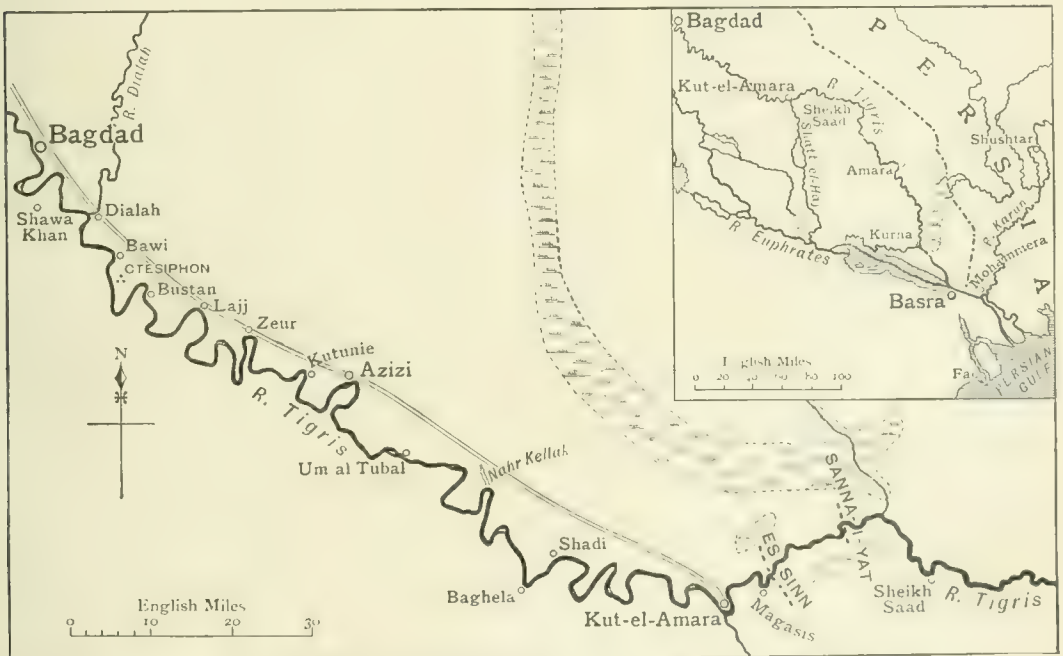
"The capture of the Sanna-i-Yat position, which the Turks believed to be impregnable," writes Sir Stanley Maude, "had only been accomplished after a fierce struggle, in which our infantry, closely supported by our artillery, displayed great gallantry and endurance against a brave and determined enemy. The latter had again suffered severely. Many trenches were choked with corpses, and the open ground where counter-attacks had taken place was strewn with them."

With their line of communication cut behind them by General Marshall's troops at Shumran, the Turks made no further attempt to hold the town of Kut, but fell back in full retreat, abandoning all their positions guarding it to General Cobbe's advancing troops. Before the day was over, the British flag was again flying over Kut, and General Townshend, ten months after his capitulation, was at length avenged. The flag had been hoisted by Captain Wilfred Nunn, C.M.G., D.S.O., who had landed for the purpose with a naval detachment on his arrival with the river flotilla after the fall of Sanna-i-Yat.

The measure of General Cobbe's

success was seen in its immediate sequel. The pursuit had only to be maintained with sufficient vigour to convert the enemy's retreat into a rout; the possibility of winning through to Bagdad itself again entered our plans—this time with every chance of success—and the Royal Navy was afforded its longed-for opportunity to

Turks continued to offer a stout opposition to General Marshall's threatening advance from the Shumran Bend, fighting a fierce rear-guard action with real grit and courage among the intricate mass of ruins, mounds, and nullahs which lie to the north-west of that peninsula. They were thus able to prevent our cavalry



Map illustrating Sir Stanley Maude's Advance on Bagdad, December, 1916-March, 1917

join in the chase. The Tigris flotilla had done much useful work in co-operating with the army in intermittent bombardments of the Turkish position, but had hitherto found its path barred by the enemy's defences at Sanna-i-Yat, and every little ship was fretting to play a more active part in the new campaign.

Throughout the 24th, however, while these things were happening between Kut and Sanna-i-Yat, the

from breaking through to attack the column of retreating Turks along the Bagdad road. That evening, while Captain Nunn was rehoisting the British flag over the deserted ruins of Kut, General Marshall's troops at Shumran closed up ready to renew the advance in force on the following morning; but morning broke to find the enemy rear-guard gone and the whole Turkish army in flight, save at various points still cunningly held

by the enemy to delay our cavalry and other troops as long as possible.

Now it was that the Royal Navy joined in the new advance beyond Kut, and as the gunboats came steaming up the river, with decks cleared for action, General Marshall's infantry in the Shumran Bend lined the banks and gave them a resounding cheer of welcome. "It was the first time for months", writes Mr. Edmund Candler, the official correspondent with the Tigris Force, "that the navy and the troops in the firing-line had met." This was on the morning of the 25th. Pressing up the river, in answer to Sir Stanley Maude's request to join in the pursuit, the nimble little gunboats—all named after insects—steamed abreast of our infantry and in sight of the enemy's rear-guard at 9.30 a.m.

"We at once opened rapid fire," wrote Captain Nunn in his account of the navy's share in the operations, "inflicting heavy casualties. This the enemy soon returned, opening an accurate fire on us with field-batteries, and several 5.9 howitzers from a prepared position among the sand-hills in the neighbourhood of Imam Mahdi. Our troops were advancing, and some of our field-artillery considerably relieved the situation by the rapidity with which they came into action. The battle continued during the day—all ships being hit by splinters of shell, but luckily no serious damage was done. Lieutenant John H. Murdock, R.N.R., of H.M.S. *Mantis*, was somewhat severely wounded in the afternoon.

"The enemy evacuated their position during the night, and we pushed on with the army in pursuit on the morning of February 26. It soon became evident that the Turkish army was much demoralized, and I received a wireless message from General Sir F. S. Maude during the fore-

noon to push on and inflict as much damage as possible. We proceeded at full speed in *Tarantula*, leading *Mantis* and *Moth*, H.M. ships *Gadfly* and *Butterfly* following at their utmost speed. My flotilla passed the small town of Baghela at 2 p.m. White flags were flying over the town, and later on Commander Ernest K. Arbuthnot, of *Gadfly*, hoisted the Union Jack over the town, bringing in also about 200 prisoners and some trench mortars."

On again upstream, full steam ahead, dodging floating mines and running the gauntlet of countless guns, yet thoroughly enjoying themselves the while, the gallant flotilla held on its course until the smoke of the enemy's own river craft could be seen. Soon they were able to distinguish among other ships H.M.S. *Firefly*, which we had to abandon on December 1, 1915, "when her boiler", explained Captain Nunn, "was disabled by a shell during the retreat from Ctesiphon, and we were surrounded by the Turkish army". The *Firefly* kept up a running fight, "making some good shooting at us with her 4-inch guns", but after being hit several times she fell again into our hands, in spite of several attempts on the enemy's part to set fire to her magazine. This, however, was not until later in the day, after the rear-guard action near the Nahr Kellak Bend, when the flotilla came under extremely heavy fire at close range from field- and machine-guns, as well as rifles.

"At this close range", added Captain Nunn, who may be left to continue the story, "there were casualties in all three ships, who were all hit many times, but our guns must have caused immense damage

to the enemy, as we were at one time firing 6-inch guns into them at about 400 to 500 yards. Besides the Turkish artillery there were a large number of enemy with rifles and machine-guns behind the bend at a range of about 100 yards from the ships.

"In the act of turning round the bend shots came from all directions, and casualties of *Moth*, which came last in the line, were particularly severe. There were casual-

riddled with bullets. The quartermaster and pilot in the conning-tower of H.M.S. *Mantis* were killed, but the prompt action of her captain saved her from running ashore. I consider that the excellent spirit of the men and skilful handling of the ships by their captains in a difficult and unknown shallow river were most praiseworthy.

"We thus passed the enemy rear-guard, and large numbers of the retreating Turkish



Drawn by Frederic Leighton

With Maude to Baghdad: naval and land forces cooperating in the British advance

ties in all three ships. *Moth*, which was magnificently handled by Lieutenant-Commander Charles H. A. Cartwright, who was himself wounded, had three officers wounded—all severely—out of four, and two men killed and eighteen wounded, which is about 50 per cent of her complement. She was hit eight times by shell—one from ahead hit the fore side of stokehold casing, burst, and pierced the port boiler, both front and back, but luckily missed the boiler tubes. The after compartment was holed below the water-line, and the upper deck and funnels of all ships

army were on our starboard beam. I opened rapid fire from all guns that would bear (this included heavy and light guns, pom-poms, Maxims, and rifles), and at this short range we did enormous execution, the enemy being too demoralized to reply, except in a very few cases. We were also able to shoot down some of their gun teams, which they deserted, and several guns thus fell into the hands of our forces when going over this ground."

It was at this stage of the running fight that the flotilla began to collect

its prizes on the river. Among the first of the smaller fry to surrender was the armed tug *Sumana*, which had been captured at Kut when that place fell ten months before. Shortly afterwards the large Turkish steamer *Basra*, full of troops and wounded, was brought to by a shell from H.M.S. *Tarantula*, which killed and wounded a number of German machine-gunners. The *Pioneer*, badly hit by the *Mantis*, was also taken, as well as some barges laden with ammunition. Darkness, and the fact that the flotilla was now far ahead of the advancing troops, prevented the pursuit from being continued farther that night. So the gunboats, resting on their laurels, dropped anchor, and buried their dead.

In this vicinity the flotilla remained during the following day, but were again in touch with, and shelling, the retreating Turks during most of the 27th, when the fugitives were also harassed by our pursuing cavalry. It was only by stripping themselves of guns and other encumbrances that the enemy succeeded in evading wholesale capture. They streamed in confusion through Azizi—50 miles from Kut and half-way to Bagdad—which was reached by our troops on March 1. Here the pursuit was temporarily broken off while the gunboats, cavalry, and General Marshall's infantry were concentrated in order to reorganize our extended line of communication. General Cobbe's force meantime closed to the front, clearing the battle-fields as it did so, and protecting the line of march.

"Immense quantities of equipment, ammunition, rifles, vehicles, and stores of all

kinds", writes Sir Stanley Maude, "lay scattered throughout the 80 miles over which the enemy had retreated under pressure, and marauders on looting intent did not hesitate to attack small parties who stood in their way. Since crossing the Tigris we had captured some 4000 prisoners—of whom 188 were officers—39 guns, 22 trench mortars, 11 machine-guns, H.M.S. *Firefly*, *Sumana* (recaptured), *Pioneer*, *Basra*, and several smaller vessels, besides 10 barges, pontoons, and other bridging material, quantities of rifles, bayonets, equipment, ammunition, and explosives of all kinds. In addition, the enemy threw into the river, or otherwise destroyed, several guns and much war material."

The supply situation having been rapidly adjusted, the pursuit was continued with renewed vigour, headed by the navy, cavalry, and Flying Corps, working together like clock-work. The cavalry reached Lajj on March 5, where the Turkish rear-guard was found in an entrenched position, very difficult to locate by reason both of a dense dust-storm, which was then blowing, and the network of nullahs with which the country was intersected. The Hussars made a brilliant charge, mounted, right into the enemy's trenches, and some prisoners were taken. Operations, however, remained extremely difficult, and during the night the enemy made good his retreat.

The dust-storm continued during the following day, when the cavalry, reconnoitring to within 3 miles of the Dialah River, which joins the Tigris on its left bank, some 8 miles below Bagdad, found the Ctesiphon position—the scene of General Townshend's costly victory—unoccu-



Drawn by Frédéric de Haenen

Nearing Bagdad. British transport column passing the ruins of the ancient arch of Ctesiphon, near the scene of General Townshend's costly victory on November 22, 1915

pied. Evidence was found that the Turks had intended to make another stand there, but the rapidity of our advance had apparently upset all their calculations in that direction. Their final effort to stem the oncoming tide was made instead on the line of the Dialah River, where, on the following day (March 7), our advance-guard again came in contact with them. The Dialah proved a most formidable obstacle, unfordable, and over 30 yards wide. The Turks, now reinforced from Bagdad, offered a stubborn resistance both here and in other positions covering the city which had once been the chief centre of the Mohammedan world. General Maude ac-

cordingly withdrew his cavalry and brought his infantry into action. The ground, it should be added, was absolutely flat and devoid of cover.

The first attempt to force the enemy from the Dialah was made by moonlight on the night of March 7-8, when it appeared as though the enemy had retired, but it immediately became evident that the line, though not strongly held, was well defended by numerous guns and machine-guns, skilfully sited. These, with the bright moonlight to help them, commanded the situation completely for the time being. Our first pontoon was launched only to be riddled by rifle and machine-gun fire. Our own artillery and machine-guns



The New Arm in Mesopotamia: preparing for the final stage of the pursuit to Bagdad

came into co-operation, but though five pontoons made the attempt to force a passage, they were all stopped by withering fire from the enemy's guns. Floating downstream, they were afterwards recovered in the Tigris with a few survivors on board. Further attempts were for the present deemed impracticable, but during the following night, after an intense bombardment of the opposite bank, ferries were arranged to effect a crossing from four separate points.

"The main enterprise achieved a qualified success," writes Sir Stanley Maude, "the most northern ferry being able to work for nearly an hour before it was stopped by very deadly rifle and machine-gun fire, and we established a small post on the right bank. When day broke, this party of seventy of the Loyal North Lancashires had driven off two determined counter-attacks, and were still maintaining themselves in a small loop of the river bund. For the next twenty four hours, until the passage of the river had been completely forced, the detachment held on gallantly in its isolated position, under constant close fire from the surrounding buildings, trenches, and gardens, being subjected to reverse as well as enfilade fire from distant points along the right bank."

By 7 a.m. on the 10th the East Lancashires and Wiltshires also succeeded in getting across, and in linking up with the detachment of Loyal North Lancashires which had so heroically held its ground there. By noon the bridge across the Dialah was completed, and our troops, pushing steadily on, drove the enemy from the riverside villages until they faced the enemy's last position covering Bagdad, along the Tel Muhammed Ridge.

In the meantime a small column from General Marshall's force had been ferried across the Tigris in order to enfilade the enemy's position from the right bank, while a portion of the force under General Cobbe, following the cavalry across the bridge which had now been constructed across the same river half a mile below Bawi, threatened the enemy's right flank, after occupying Shawa Khan without opposition during the forenoon of the 9th. Lack of water, which was sadly needed by the horses, forced the cavalry, later in the day, to withdraw, but the infantry, keeping touch with the Turks throughout the night, again came up with their rear-guard on the

following morning, within 3 miles of Bagdad. This was the morning of the 10th, when the Loyal North Lancashires were still making their valiant stand in the loop of the Dialah Bend. Our cavalry patrols, forging ahead, reached during the same morning a point 2 miles west of Bagdad railway station, but were then checked by the enemy's fire, a gale and blinding dust-storm limiting the range of vision to a few yards, while the absence of water away from the river added greatly to the hardships of the ordeal both for the troops and animals. During the night the enemy retired, and our troops, following the Decauville railway as their guide, occupied Bagdad railway station before 6 a.m. the next morning, when it was discovered that the enemy on the right bank had discreetly retreated upstream of Bagdad.

Early that day General Marshall, pushing on with all speed, entered the city unopposed. Anarchy had reigned unchecked there for some hours, the flight of the Turkish army having

been the signal for Kurds and Arabs to loot the bazaars and set fire indiscriminately to various points. Happily our infantry guards were soon on the spot, and, with the hoisting of the British flag over the city, order was restored without difficulty.

That afternoon saw the triumphant arrival of the gunboat flotilla, in line-ahead formation, preceded by minesweepers, and having on board one of its accompanying paddle-steamers Sir Stanley Maude and Staff. The flotilla anchored off the British Residency, while the two forces under Generals Marshall and Cobbe, disposed one on either bank of the Tigris, provided for the security of the city approaches, the pursuit of the fugitive Turks meanwhile being continued up river. The enemy had been removing his military stores for over a fortnight before we entered Bagdad, but immense quantities of booty were nevertheless captured, including all the guns (rendered useless by General Townshend) which had fallen into Turkish hands at the capitulation of Kut.



The Captured Train of the Bagdad Railway train leaving the city northward towards Mosul.

From a photograph taken by the British forces, showing the captured train of the Bagdad Railway.



The British Entry into Bagdad, March 11, 1917

Official Photograph

Though shorn of its ancient splendour, the "Queen of Cities" was still the centre of the largest province in the Turkish Empire, and had long been the head-quarters of a Turkish army corps, as well as the base of supplies for operations both in Mesopotamia and western Persia. Old Bagdad, with its romantic memories of the "Arabian Nights", and the great Caliph Haroun Al Raschid, lies in ruins on the western bank of the Tigris. The modern city is situated for the greater part on the eastern bank of the river, which is crossed

by a bridge of boats. Many of the mosques are in ruins, but the bazaars are large and well stocked, that of David Pasha still ranking as one of the most splendid in the world.

During the war, the population, estimated at 150,000, had been systematically robbed by the Turkish army, and the non-Turkish residents—Persians, Arabs, Armenians, Chaldeans, and Christians of divers sects and races—gave the conquerors an enthusiastic welcome as they approached the city between the palm groves and orange gardens which

bordered their road. "In the city itself", writes Mr. Candler "they lined the streets, balconies, and roofs, hurrahing and clapping their hands," while groups of children danced in front of the troops, shouting and cheering. The Turkish troops had spent their last days in the city in looting and destroying, blowing up, among other things, the bridge of boats and the Turkish army-clothing factory. The railway station, the civil hospital, and most British property were either destroyed or damaged, though the enemy spared the Residency, which had been used as a Turkish hospital.

"Our own attitude", adds Mr. Candler, "was characteristic; there was no display, or attempt at creating an impression. The troops entered dusty and unshaven, after several days' fighting and bivouacking."

The news of the fall of Bagdad, following so swiftly on the recapture of Kut, was received with the utmost enthusiasm throughout the British Empire, and completely re-established British prestige in the East. Fitting tribute was paid to everyone concerned, in a statement by Mr. Bonar Law in the House of Commons on the following day.

"General Maude's troops", he said, "have in these operations completed the victory of Kut-el-Amara by a pursuit of 110 miles in fifteen days, during which the River Tigris was crossed three times. This pursuit has been conducted in a country destitute of

supplies and in spite of the commencement of the summer heats. Apart from the skill and vigour of the leadership, and the valour and endurance of the troops, both British and Indian, which are self-evident, such operations could only have been carried out in such country if most careful and elaborate arrangements for the supply of the troops had been thoroughly and systematically prepared. The fact that General Maude has not only been able to feed his army, provide it with ammunition, and assure proper attendance of the sick and wounded, but is able to report that he is satisfied that he can provide for the necessities of his army in Bagdad, reflects the greatest credit upon all who have been concerned for the due provision of his needs."

Sir Stanley Maude completed his triumph by securing control of the upper waters of the Tigris before the approaching flood season allowed the enemy to inundate the low-lying city by diverting the course of the river. This was accomplished, after much stiff fighting among the sandhills and steep nullahs of the difficult region to which the retreating Turks had retired, before the end of the month, by which time the total number of prisoners taken since the opening of the new campaign amounted to close upon 8000 officers and men. The full story of these operations, however, and of the subsequent events leading up to the death of the soldier who had so brilliantly retrieved the situation in Mesopotamia, must be left for a later chapter.

F. A. M.

CHAPTER V

THE ALLIES' OPENING OFFENSIVE OF 1917
ON THE WESTERN FRONT

Combined Strategy and the Russian Revolution—The German Withdrawal from the Somme Salient—Advance of the British Fourth and Fifth Armies—Corresponding French Advance—German Barbaric Destruction—The Hindenburg Line and its Attachments—Tactical Defences and Positions—Strategical Considerations—Modification of General Haig's Plan—Value of the Vimy Position—Work of the Flying Corps—Plans for the Third and First Armies—The Assault on the Vimy Ridge, April 9—The Battle continued—Capture of Monchy-le-Preux—Gains of the Battle of Arras.

IN surveying the operations which the French and British forces on the Western Front undertook in 1917, the consideration presents itself that however desirable it may be that political necessities should not interfere with strategic conceptions, it is impossible in a war waged by a coalition to separate them. In the conference of military representatives of all the Allied Powers, meeting at French General Head-quarters in November, 1916, it had been agreed that a series of offensives on the Western Front, the Russian Front, and the Italian Front should be so timed that the Central Powers would not be able to weaken any one of their fronts in order to counter an attack on another. In respect of the Western Front, where the co-ordination of the British and French effort could be more precisely effected, the movements of the British forces under the direction of Sir Douglas Haig were made contingent on those of the French main army under the direction of General Nivelle. In respect of the French plan of campaign it is clear that the results attained during the spring of 1917 fell short of the expectations which had

been formed, and that in spite of the genius and bravery shown in the operations, the dissatisfaction evoked, and expressed, in the French Chamber, was sufficient to alter their character.

This was a political factor; though, had the disappointment at the result of the operations been confined to the French Chamber, and had it not received the endorsement of high military opinion in France, its direct effect might have been negligible. Joined, however, to military considerations, it modified the vigour of the French offensive, though before this modification became stereotyped the military position in itself sufficed to affect the plan originally outlined by Sir Douglas Haig for the British co-operation. This military-political factor was, however, insignificant by the side of the political results of the Russian revolution. The Russian revolution first delayed and then stifled Russian military co-operation, and though the full results of this defection were not felt till 1918, there was only a short period in 1917 when the Germans could have felt any anxiety about their Eastern Front; and no period at all when military necessities there caused

any modification of their plans for the defence of their Western lines.

The steady pressure of Sir Douglas Haig's winter campaign of 1916-17, as related in the concluding chapter of the last volume, had driven the enemy back by the end of February to positions known as the Le Transloy Lou-

mation of this withdrawal was offered on March 14, when portions of the German front line near St. Pierre Vaast Wood were found empty. The symptoms of retreat spread east and west, and the information which began to trickle through the Intelligence Department convinced Sir Douglas Haig



BRITISH IN OCCUPATION

The Trail of the Retreating German Army: one of the ruined streets of Bapaume, occupied by the British troops on March 17, 1917

part line, with the fortified village of Irles forming a salient in it. Irles, methodically brought within striking distance, fell to a dashing little assault in the early morning of March 10, and with it went the practicability of holding any longer the German forward line of which it was the key. The fall of this line was the prelude to that larger withdrawal for which the Germans had been preparing during the winter. The earliest inti-

that the line held so obstinately for so long by the enemy was now supported only by rear-guard companies with machine-guns, ready at the suitable moment for withdrawal.

There was no element of surprise in this phenomenon beyond that which might result from the date chosen by the German Higher Command for the finishing touches of evacuation; but what was uncertain was the extent of the retirement, the nature of the rear-



Australian Official Photograph

Bapaume, March 17, 1917: how the Australians entered the town, headed by their band

guard resistance, and the character of the country which the pursuing British and French columns would have to traverse, and which the Germans might be expected to make as difficult as possible. By March 19 the second as well as the first of these questions had been answered. The whole British Front, from the Roye Road to Arras, was set in motion on the 17th, and, except for the resistance, quickly smothered, of German machine-gun companies, it made its way without effort through Vaux Wood and Achiet-le-Grand to Chaulnes and Bapaume, while the French took Roye. It was a strange march, through a land seamed with trenches on which the work of many months, many army corps, had been spent, on which the roads had been destroyed, the country ruined, and every device which in-

genuity could suggest to trap the unwary had been employed.

In the German Fatherland a subservient German press was busy explaining that the evacuation was one more example of Hindenburg's elastic strategy, and that the result of it would be to add to the embarrassment of the enemy. But the British and French, stubbornly refusing to accept this view, converted the progress into something which resembled a triumph. Bapaume was entered while its buildings still smouldered and the wreckage of its houses and public buildings was still clattering down; but the Australians marched in with their band playing, and men of the overseas contingent, from Singapore to Hong-Kong and from India to New Zealand, lined up the ruins to hear them as they went sounding through the town.

The ruins left little to be desired from the point of view of German thoroughness; the lessons of Louvain had not been taught in vain. The houses were looted of everything of value and then fired, and shells from a safe distance had completed what the incendiaries had begun. Many of the houses, noted an observer who entered the town behind the first British troops, had collapsed as though built of cards, with all their roofs level with the ground; others were cut in half as though a high-explosive Zeppelin bomb had fallen on them. From the stone church smoke rose to the skies; and the only thing that lived amid the desolation was a kitten, which ran across the square and was captured to become the pet of the first company

of patrols. No Germans were captured; the nest of German machine-gunners who fired on the entering troops were, as the laconic telephone message ran, "all accounted for".

The ruin of Péronne, that once so pretty and engaging little town, was even more systematic, and seemed more dastardly because of the unashamed demolition of its historic buildings. Of the sixteenth-century Church of St. Jean the walls and clinging fragments of roof alone were left. The Hôtel de Ville, once a lovely miracle of Renaissance architecture, had lost all but the broken arches of its façade; and the Hun, to add insult to this brutal injury, had affixed a placard on his work—"Nicht argern nur wundern", which, roughly trans-



Péronne, March 18, 1917: British troops entering the town abandoned by the retreating enemy

lated, means "Don't be annoyed, just admire it!" There was not in Péronne one habitable house; but where the Germans thought it likely that the British would incautiously explore public buildings, they had left a variety of infernal machines, which they ex-

a continually increasing strain was placed on these armies of engineers, constructors, and labour battalions which are the weight behind the spear-head of the infantry. On March 21 and 22, in spite of the increasing resistance of the enemy as his barrier



The Ruins of Péronne—continued on the opposite page—showing the placard left by the departing enemy on the Hôtel de Ville

pected would blow intruders to pieces, or at least maim them. In Péronne no Germans were found either dead or living, but only two dummies of soldiers; and—besides the cratered streets, the ruined houses, and the booby death traps—a vast amount of German filth.

As the movement of the fronts progressed the difficulties multiplied, and

was approached, the British Fifth and Fourth Armies, under the command respectively of Generals Sir Hubert Gough and Sir Henry Rawlinson, had pushed east of Péronne, and next day the line extended from Etreillers, 6 miles south-west of St. Quentin, to Beaumetz, 6 miles east of Bapaume. On the 24th Rawlinson's troops captured the railway junction of Roisel,

7 miles east of Péronne, and two days later Gough's men were 2 miles north of the Bapaume-Cambrai road. These steps forward were not taken without fighting; five separate attempts were made to capture Beaumetz-lez-Cambrai by the Germans, not probably

mutual support, and this co-operation was especially effective when, on April 2, the British forces came against the considerable series of villages, north of the Bapaume-Cambrai road, which formed the German advanced line of resistance. A general



British Official Photograph

The Ruins of Péronne—continued from the opposite page—occupied by the British troops on March 18, 1917

with a view to holding it, but because it was a useful *point d'appui* to delay an advance which was becoming too rapid to allow the Germans to settle down comfortably in their prepared positions farther back.

Nothing was more admirable than the way in which the advance of Rawlinson's and Gough's armies dovetailed into one another and gave

attack on these positions along a 10-mile front, from Doignies to Henin-sur-Cojeul, was sufficient to capture them, though the small number of prisoners (270) testified to the German's reluctance to fight against odds. By the first week of April, General Gough's troops were within 2 miles of St. Quentin, and the general line was firmly established through Selency,

Epehy, Havrincourt Wood, Royalcourt, Doignies, Mercatel, Beaurains. Rawlinson seized Renssoy on April 5, and Lempire on the 6th. The advance then paused in order to consolidate its forces and prepare for heavier tasks.

While the British Fourth and Fifth Armies were pushing towards the Cambrai-St. Quentin line, the French, operating on a 30-mile front, from the north of the Upper Somme to the south of the Oise, followed up the retreating Germans towards the new line they were occupying between St. Quentin and in front of Laon. Ham, with its ancient citadel badly damaged, was occupied on March 19; the long-sustained pressure on Soissons and its Cathedral was relieved by the capture of Crouy. The railway junction of Tergnier was swiftly seized, and on the 22nd the French were across the Crozat Canal, and were pushing the German rear-guards towards the Oise. Their advance proceeding swiftly, they crossed the Arlette River, and secured the lower part of the forest of Coucy, till they stood on the outskirts of the upper forest and the forest of St. Gobain. After a pause to bring up guns the French drove the Germans back on to Vauxaillon and Laffaux on April 1, and two days afterwards were astride the upper Somme, south-west of St. Quentin, and in possession of Urvillers and Moy. Here they paused while, behind their entrenched lines north-west of Rheims, General Nivelle collected reserves and artillery for the chief French effort of 1917.

The French advance to this point, like that of Rawlinson and Gough,

had been through a country which was as unrecognizable to them as to the British, so ruthlessly had it been devastated by the Germans. The systematic destruction of buildings, of villages, of roads, may have found a parallel in the retreats through Poland and Galicia, but there has never been anything so methodical as the German devastation of the country where their billets had lain for more than two years. Whole towns and villages were pillaged, burnt, destroyed; private houses were stripped of all their furniture, which the Germans, unsurpassed among barbarians as looters, carried off; fruit trees were torn up or cut down; springs and wells were poisoned with filth. A few, a very few, inhabitants were left in the villages, with the smallest ration of food to keep them alive; most of the others, since perhaps they might prove useful, were marched off farther north; the Germans took possession of the stocks provided by the Neutral Relief Committee and intended for the civil population. The result, and it may be safely said the intention of the Germans, was not merely to hamper the advance of the opposing armies, but to ruin for years to come one of the most fertile regions of France. This concerted retreat of the Germans, and the corresponding advance of the Allies, finally closed the winter campaign of which they were the epilogue, and paved the way for the actions of 1917.

The Allied spring operations of 1917 resolve themselves into three categories. The first is the following up by the British and the French of

the Germans as they retreated from their difficult situations in the Somme basin to the prepared positions which they named first the Hindenburg line, and afterwards distinguished by other appellations, according to the position, as the Siegfried line, or the Drocourt-Quéant switch line. The second was the British attack from Arras to Lens, which interlocked with the third. The third was the French attack between Soissons and Rheims.

The Hindenburg line, as Sir Douglas Haig observed in the dispatch of June 19, 1917, in which he described the enforced retreat of the Germans from the salient between Arras and Transloy and their withdrawal, in order to economize effectives, from the greater salient between Arras and the Aisne valley, north-west of Rheims, was a very formidable defensive system. Advance towards it had to be made cautiously over country denuded of the means of communication; from it the enemy's intact armies could be launched in a vigorous counter-stroke should any opening present itself through a want of caution on the part of the advancing British; on it the Germans could fall back should their counter-stroke miss fire. The geographical selection of the line was known to strategists long before the European war, and, regarded from its opposite face, was the system of defence selected by Vauban in the seventeenth century for the protection of northern France. The line extends from the west of Douai and Cambrai to St. Quentin, and thence to the Laon-La Fère position. The Laon-La Fère plateau position is the southern bastion

of the line; the Vimy Ridge, north-east of Arras, is the northern dominating height.

Thus, protected at either end, it forms the central sector of the northern defences of France, which are pierced by three main routes of advance or withdrawal. These routes follow the valleys of the chief rivers flowing from northern France through the Belgian plain. The first route is that of the River Scarpe, which rises west of Arras and passes through Douai to empty itself into the Scheldt. The second is the line of the Scheldt, which rises south of Cambrai, and is linked up with the Oise and the Somme by the Crozat or St. Quentin Canal. The Paris-Brussels railway follows this line from Cambrai to Valenciennes. The third and most significant route goes along the Oise and enters the Sambre valley a few miles west of Maubeuge. The main railway from Berlin to Paris follows this route.

Douai, astride the Scarpe, and the hub of roads and railways, blocks the way along the first of these routes into Flanders. Cambrai occupies the analogous position on the second route down the Scheldt. St. Quentin and La Fère, which the Germans firmly held, shut the gate into the valley of the Sambre. The line of defence which the Germans drew between Drocourt and Quéant, and thence beyond St. Quentin to the east, appeared weakest in the middle, strongest on the flanks. The Vimy Ridge, its north-western pillar, stretching from Givency to Bailleul for 6 miles or more north-east of Arras, had been strongly fortified, and was by the Ger-

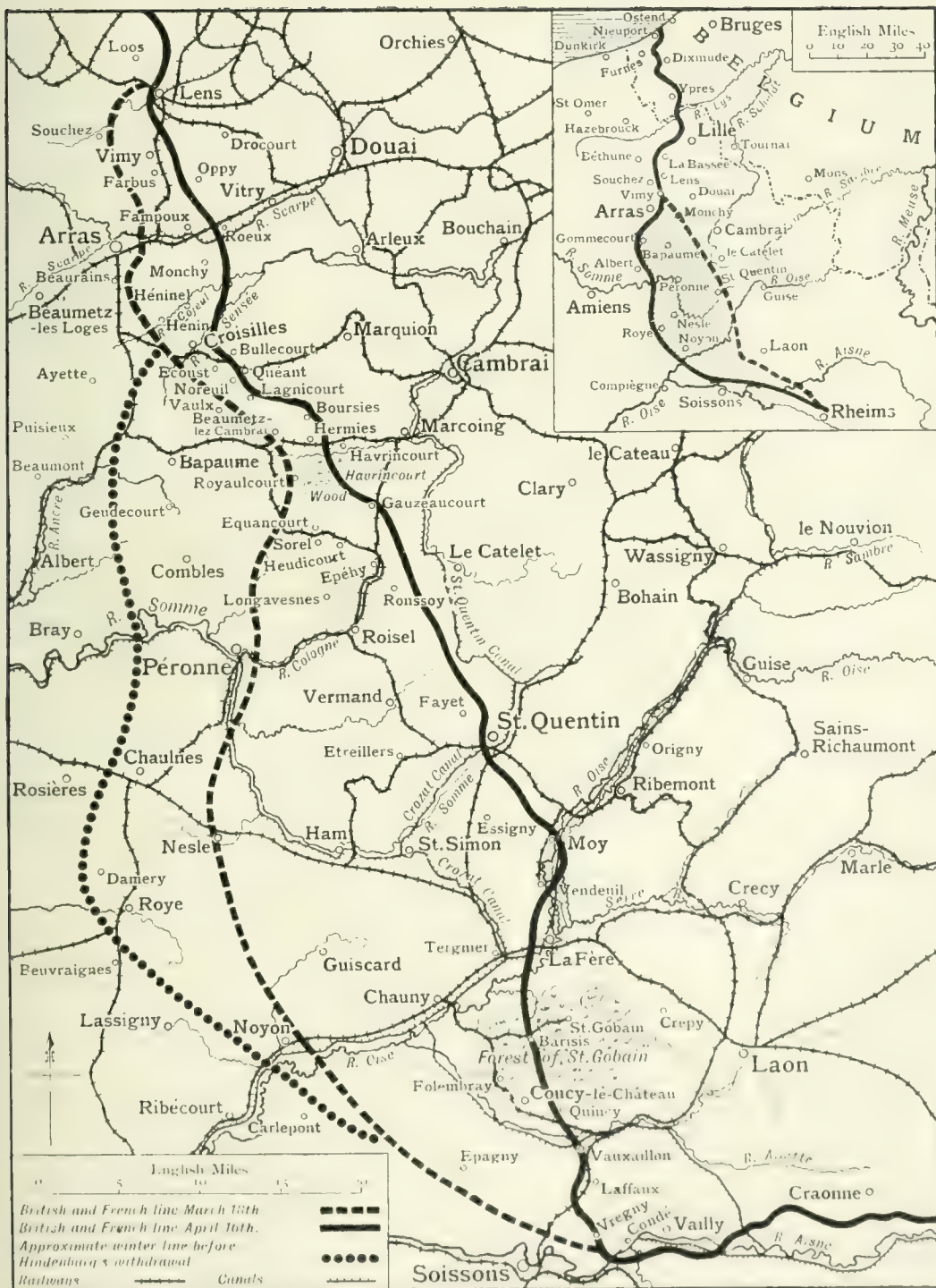
mans announced to be impregnable. The La Fère-Laon position, occupying in the south a function in the German scheme similar to that of the Vimy Ridge, proved more truly inaccessible. La Fère and Laon are situated at the feet of the northern spurs of the Falaise de Champagne, a semicircle of low hills separating the plains of Champagne from the great Brie plateau north of the Aisne. Rising from the river between Soissons and Berry-au-Bac are a series of rugged and thickly-wooded heights, on one of which stood Coucy-le-Château. They culminate in the forests of Coucy and St. Gobain.

These are a most formidable obstacle to any advance northwards which is made with the intention of reaching the Laon-La Fère position, which was the ultimate goal of General Nivelle's plan. That plan, as M. Painlevé subsequently observed in the Chamber of Deputies, was too grandiose for the means at French disposal: and, in brief, it failed through its costliness. About half-way between the Aisne and the Oise is the River Ailette, which, rising northwest of Craonne, flows nearly parallel to the Aisne before reaching the Oise. It is largely canalized, and at Chavigny the canal turns towards the Aisne, which it joins. One other feature of the region over which the French operated is more important than any others. Immediately north of the Aisne, and about 3 miles distance, runs the ridge and road known as the Chemin-des-Dames. It is a dominating position, for which many struggles had been waged in

other centuries, and the winning and holding of which were to be the greatest achievement of the French during the year.

In considering the Western campaign of 1917 as a whole, it is important to take into account the German intentions as well as those of the Allies. By relinquishing the Somme salient, the German Higher Command shortened their line by 40 miles; the provision of the Hindenburg line, which would demand a smaller number of men for its defence than an equal length of line less adaptable or less reinforced for purposes of resistance, would still further economize men; and the resultant economy would furnish Field-Marshal Hindenburg with a new army of reserves, or mass of manœuvre, which could be used to attack any vulnerable point of the Allied Front.

As a response to this plan the Allies must strike the Germans so hard as to use up or exhaust these reserves; and two plans offered themselves for consideration. Both were considered at the Headquarters' Conference of November, 1916; and, possibly because there were two, and not a single plan, neither was completely successful. The first was the French plan of striking direct for Laon, which, if held, would have separated the two sections of the German Grand Army at a vital point of communication. The second was the British plan of smashing the westerly half of the German army, thus inflicting the severest blow on the German submarine campaign by threatening its bases. The most important step



Map illustrating the German Retreat after the Battle of the Somme

towards this goal would be taken by bursting out of that Ypres salient which British troops had held so long and with such a drain of losses, and by securing the ridges which surrounded it.

Sir Douglas Haig, in his dispatch of January 4, 1918, makes no secret of his preference for this action, which, though less fundamental in its effects, would, if completely successful, have placed the British army, no less than the British forces by sea and land, in a stronger position than they had occupied since the war began. It was necessary, however, to make this aim contingent on the French plan; and what appears now to be a compromise was arrived at. Sir Douglas Haig was originally to conform to the French strategy by attacking simultaneously both shoulders of the German salient between the Somme and the Ancre, the Fifth Army operating on the Ancre front, while the Third Army attacked from the north-west in the neighbourhood of Arras. The front of the Third Army attack on the Arras side would include the Vimy Ridge. These operations, when pushed to a conclusion, would be of considerable assistance to the French; and would use up German reserves. Sir Douglas Haig then expected that he would be able to proceed with what may be described as the specifically British aim of attacking the outer ridges of the Ypres salient. This plan, however, was still further modified in conformation with the new French plans evolved by General Nivelle, who regarded the blow at Laon as imperative, and asked for the

assistance of larger British forces, and for a longer period, than had been at first contemplated. Consequently, while the Arras blow was retained as part of the British operations, the Ypres plan receded temporarily into the background. It resumed its original place only when events proved that the French plan, in its entirety, could not be carried out; and by that period it may be assumed that time had been lost and some dispersion of the British forces and striking momentum had taken place.

Two other modifications, one small and one great, may be stated in a few words. The Hindenburg withdrawal did not greatly affect Sir Douglas Haig's plans, since he had not prepared to operate in that direction; but it did call for some readjustment of the Fifth Army. On the other hand, the Russian revolution set free a number of German divisions, both immediately and prospectively, and rendered plans which in 1916 had looked feasible, and even simple, a great deal less practicable or promising. Nevertheless, nothing was to be gained by waiting. Sir Douglas Haig resolved to strike before matters grew worse.

The first objective of the Arras thrust, and wrongly regarded by some as the whole of the Arras battle, was the possession of the Vimy Ridge. The Artois country, in which the battle of Arras was fought, is a tableland walling in on the left the Douai plain, which is of the Flanders type of country — low-lying and overwatered. It is not a lofty tableland, but rising from it are hills and ridges,

of which that of Vimy is the most important. The main roads skirt the ridges or pass along their slopes; and away from them the country is traversed by a network of sunken roads, often of great depth. The frequent ridges, the little woods, the sunken roads, the collieries and their earth-works, had made the Artois country

It was a maxim of Napoleon that, whatever else he lost, he would never lose a minute; and Sir Douglas Haig, having made his dispositions, prepared to strike the blow from Arras at the earliest day. The difficulties lay in the preliminaries, for the neighbourhood of Arras was not well served by its two single lines of railway; proper

roads were to seek; and at all times it is an awkward matter for large forces to debouch from a town. Consequently, new lines had to be laid, roads improved, water-supply guaranteed, a very careful selection of routes for the advance selected, and extensive mining and tunnelling operations carried out for sheltering the shock battalions and reserves. In the preparation of these shelters use was made of the quarries outside Arras and the extensive cellarage of



British Official Photograph

The Cost of War at Arras, scene among the ruins of part of the cathedral

a very hard defensive nut to crack, and it had defied the Allies at every attempt, whether French or British. The possession of the Vimy Ridge would deprive the Germans of observation-posts, and would give the victors a wide view over the plains to Douai and beyond. Moreover, it was a position which the Germans, who had fortified it most strongly, were bound to defend, and they must suffer heavy losses of prisoners and guns in any withdrawal from it.

its suburbs. Equally important, and more visible to the eye, were the immediate necessity of blinding the Germans to the impending action by destroying their observation balloons and by driving their aeroplanes from the sky. This work was performed by the Royal Flying Corps in gales and snowstorms; it was carried out with a completeness hitherto unattained in aerial warfare.

From dawn on April 5 to April 7, night and day, the British aeroplanes



Photograph by Canadian War Records

The Capture of the Vimy Ridge, April 9, 1917: Canadian Light Horse going into action

bombed the German aerodromes, railway junctions, and ammunition dumps, and the lighter fighting squadrons crossed the German lines to seek out the enemy machines and force them to fight. We lost heavily, if we inflicted heavy losses also; but in the end local supremacy was won, and the tactics so gallantly persisted in by our fighting 'planes secured our photographing machines from interference, and enabled our guns to put in their best work. On two days (April 5-6) we lost twenty-eight machines; but the German bulletins of "great air successes" were a poor compensation to them for the knowledge that they had had their eyes put out, and could not reply effectively to our guns.

The importance of the Vimy Ridge as an object of attack is rendered conspicuous by a consideration, first, of the general German line, which ran north-westwards from St. Quentin to a point immediately below Arras, and

thence continuing at an obtuse angle, due north, crossed the valley of the Scarpe to the ridge. Thereafter the line descended from the high ground to the plain, and, skirting the suburbs of Lens, went on to the Channel through a country of sluggish rivers, dykes, and canals. Only one other system of hills lies between the Vimy Ridge and the sea; it is the encircling horseshoe about Ypres, which ends at Passchendaele. What Sir Douglas Haig attacked with the First and Third Armies on the morning of April 9 was the sector from just below Arras (Croisilles) to just south of Givenchy-en-Gohelle, where the foot of the Vimy Ridge steps down into the flat country. It was a 15-mile front, and took in 5 miles of the Hindenburg line, as well as one of the elaborated German triple-trench systems which formed a defensive belt 2 to 5 miles deep. It was these defensive systems which had to be

battered by artillery, supervised by the aeroplanes, before the infantry could be sent in.

The Third Army, under General Allenby, and the First Army, under General Horne, were given the work to do. General Horne's army was to face the Vimy Ridge; the Canadian corps were given pride of place in the assault. Scottish and South African troops were to have their share with the English regiments in those who were to go over and go on. The attack was planned in a succession of short advances; the enemy's first line to be carried, and then a pause for realignment; then another advance, till the triple line of defences had

fallen. The first onrush was to wait on the final artillery preparation; the infantry were then to follow on the barrage—"on its back wheel", as a sergeant-major told one of the men in a London regiment.

For days before the weather had been fine; April 9, Easter Monday, broke with a clouded sky and the north-west wind bringing up rain, as the officers, timing with their wrist watches the approach of "zero-hour", waited with their men in the trenches. Of the preliminary bombardment, which was the fiercest that up to that day the war had shown, Sir Douglas Haig observes no more than that it was a most effective artillery barrage;



British troops in a trench during the Battle of Arras.

The Battle of Arras, April 9, 1917. British troops leaving their trenches to attack.

but those who saw and heard it as spectators and auditors merely were shaken by its magnitude. Shells from our batteries had been falling methodically all night on German earthworks and the concrete pill-boxes on the Vimy heights; but these had ceased in the darkness before dawn. Then,

palling blast German trenches were obliterated and the wiring shredded to bits. Behind the shell-fire the infantry poured in a flood which overwhelmed the garrisons of the German first-line trenches. In forty minutes the whole of that system had fallen into British hands with the exception



Photograph by Canadian War Records

Canada's Task on the Vimy Heights: one of the captured German gun emplacements on top of the ridge

while the light of morning struggled into the sky, the guns were loosed again as if by one uplifted finger, and more than a thousand of them, from the 15-inch howitzers to the batteries of 18-pounders, burst out along a 12-mile front. The outbreak was compared to chain-lightning crackling from the guns, with a response of sheet-lightning as the shells burst on the German positions, and under this ap-

of one of those desperately held strongholds where a few brave men will always hold out. This stronghold was Hill 145, at the northern end of Vimy Ridge.

Behind the infantry came up the engineers, the machine-guns, the trench mortars, and all the deadly mechanism of a second assault, for which in the briefest possible time the preparations were flung in. The first wave

had gone over the top at 5.30; the second flowed forward two hours later; and now it began to wash against stronger obstacles, so that by the hour these should have been captured some were still held by the Germans. The chief nodules of resistance were Observation Ridge, on the extreme south of the assaulting line, and Railway Triangle, where the lines to Lens and Douai meet. But by midday men from the Eastern Counties had captured all of Observation Ridge and all of the second line of German defences except Railway Triangle, so that our battle line ran from Neuville Vitasse, which London Territorials had stormed on the south, to La Folie Farm, which the Canadians had overrun in spite of the wet and sticky ground—it was now raining and snowing—on the north. Between these points and north of the Scarpe the heaviest work had fallen to Scottish Territorial and North Country troops, who had gone through a very heavy machine-gun fire. Their advance slowed, as their comrades fell about them, but never checked.

All this time the engineers, the sweating gunners and their teams, were labouring to get up their batteries to support the impending attack on the third line of German defences; but the resistance offered at Observation Ridge had, like a slipped cog-wheel in a machine, put the orderly movement out of gear, so that the batteries could not get well up, and the enemy's third-line wire could not be well cut. Nevertheless, the triumphant line, going forward again a little after midday, was not to be denied.

Manchester and Liverpool troops took it forward south of the Scarpe, past St. Martin-le-Cojeul, and towards Feuchy Chapel on the road to Cambrai. Here the first counter-attack was met and turned back. Better still, about two o'clock, Scottish troops, after a bitter struggle, carried Railway Triangle, and then this division went forward like a stream in spate, carrying the Germans on and through Feuchy village, and making a breach in their third line.

The Scots did even better north of the Scarpe. With the South Africans they first stormed the village of St. Laurent Blagny, and then Athies. Thus they opened a way for an English division, coming up behind them and passing through their ranks, to capture Fampoux village and a redoubt in the German third line, in which thus a second and a wider breach was made. North Countrymen levered it further open towards the north by seizing the strong work of the Point-du-Jour, the "point of the jaw", as the victors complacently called it. Still farther north the Canadian divisions, with an English brigade in their centre, had cleaned up the Vimy Ridge from Commandant's House to Hill 145. Hill 145 was left for another day.

This day had seen some bitterly hard work; for after the success of the first rush the storming troops found themselves enfiladed from the north, and, worse than that, from the rear. On the crest of the ridge two great galleries had been tunnelled, where the Germans were secure from shell-fire, and whence, though the de-

fenders could not, or did not, get up in time to hold up the Canadian rush, they could pour in a galling fire after it had been passed over. However, the Canadians, and the British brigade with them, dealt with this form of reprisal drastically, and it was from these tunnels that a large proportion of the prisoners on this wing were scooped out. By one o'clock the main portion of the ridge was British, and the victorious troops dug themselves in on the eastern side of Farbus Wood and along the steep eastern slopes west and north-west of Farbus village. At their feet lay Vimy village, beyond it Bailleul,¹ Oppy, and Mericourt. Such was the great work of April 9, complete in all but a few details, and laying the foundation for a further super-

¹ To be distinguished from the Bailleul of the Ypres sector.

structure of advantage. More than 9000 prisoners came through the cages, of which the left of the attack, where the Canadians were, claimed 4000; the centre, just south of this, accounting for 3500, which included a German General of Brigade and his Staff, bitterly mortified at being caught in a dug-out without a chance to put up a fight.

Next day, April 10, was devoted to enlarging the gains, and in rounding off the attack, so as to complete the theoretic plan. On the left, for example, Hill 145 had to be reduced. The Canadians did that, and in spite of its trenches, dug-outs, and underground tunnels, added this stronghold to the British freehold of the ridge, together with the 200 Germans who had remained alive to surrender it. More important than this was the



SECTION OF THE CANADIAN ARTILLERY—BRINGING SOME OF THE CAPTURED GERMAN GUNS INTO ACTION ON THE SECOND DAY OF THE ARRAS BATTLE



British Official Photograph

A Corner of the Arras Battlefield, April, 1917: infantry filing towards the communication-trenches; artillery and a tank coming into action; cavalry (in the distance) advancing towards the retreating enemy

work yet to be done south of the Scarpe. The capture of Monchy-le-Preux and the rest of the German third line was imperative. Throughout the night (April 9-10) English troops bombed their way through the gap opened east of Feuchy, and in the wet morning others poured through it till they reached the enclosures north-west of Monchy-le-Preux. By noon the advance, as it widened, spread over and secured the German third line here; but on the right a galling fire, pouring in from the village of Heninel, Wancourt, and Guémappe, held us off the prize of Monchy. The German machine-gun fire, then as always the most effective and best-handled German weapon, could not be subdued without more help than our artillery could give. Scottish and English troops pushed on as far as the western edge, and there held on.

So the position rested south of the Scarpe through the afternoon, evening, and night. Then, at five o'clock in the morning of April 11, reinforcements of two fresh English infantry brigades, supported by Tanks, which arrived at a most opportune moment, smashed into the village. Once in, they found the enemy streaming out, and into the retreating Germans was poured a replica of the machine-gun fire with which they had held us up. The Germans were, however, not quite done with; they were sent back to counter-attack, but their assaults lacked conviction, and were beaten off.

Nevertheless, the battle of Arras was now nearing, so far as this phase was concerned, the limits of its success. The advance we had made had carried our line beyond the range of sufficient artillery support; any further

progress must be pushed over slopes commanded by the unsubdued German machine-gun fire; and the weather refused to shine on our efforts to get the heavier guns up into position to deal with this form of defence. Another form of dealing with the enemy's resistance was tried, but it was not a success. Before the attack of the First and Third Armies was launched, Sir Douglas Haig had provided for the co-operation of the Fourth and Fifth Armies (Rawlinson and Gough) if and when the main assault succeeded; and on April 11 the Fifth Army delivered an attack at 4.30 a.m. against the Hindenburg line at Bullecourt. Australians and Yorkshires (West Riding) laid the foundation of a very dashing and gallant attack over open country. Parties of the Australians and some tanks got as far within the German positions as Riencourt-les-Cagnicourt. This fine piece of work was wasted. Between the Fifth Army and the Third Army, which it had been hoped to link by this manœuvre, lay Heninel and Wancourt; and throughout April 11 these held out obstinately against the Third Army. Consequently the Fifth Army had no choice but to withdraw to its original line.

On April 12, however—if it had but been a day sooner!—the efforts to get forward the big guns over the sodden country began to bear fruit. Some howitzers and 8-inch and 9-inch

batteries were got into position, and hammered the German third line hard. New divisions also were brought up to relieve the tired troops, and both Heninel and Wancourt were carried, thus completing the capture of the Hindenburg line for 2000 yards south of the Cojeul River. North of the Scarpe an attack on Roeux heralded what was to prove in this sector a fierce and stubbornly contested struggle lasting many days; but on the extreme left English and Canadian troops of the First Army captured the two hills known as the Pimple and the Bois-en-Hache, situated on the eastern side of the Souchez River. This completely rounded off the capture of the whole of the Vimy Ridge, and destroyed all German hopes of successful counter-attack. From that day onwards signs of their recognition of this fact multiplied, and the extent of their withdrawal from areas now commanded by our guns steadily widened. And though the operations as a whole had not produced all the results that had been hoped, the position at the time, taken in conjunction with what the French promised to do at Craonne and Moronvilliers, and what Sir Douglas Haig subsequently threatened to do in the Ypres salient, was full of promise for the Entente armies of the Western Front.

E. S. G.

CHAPTER VI

GENERAL NIVELLE'S OFFENSIVE—THE BATTLE OF CRAONNE

(April, 1917)

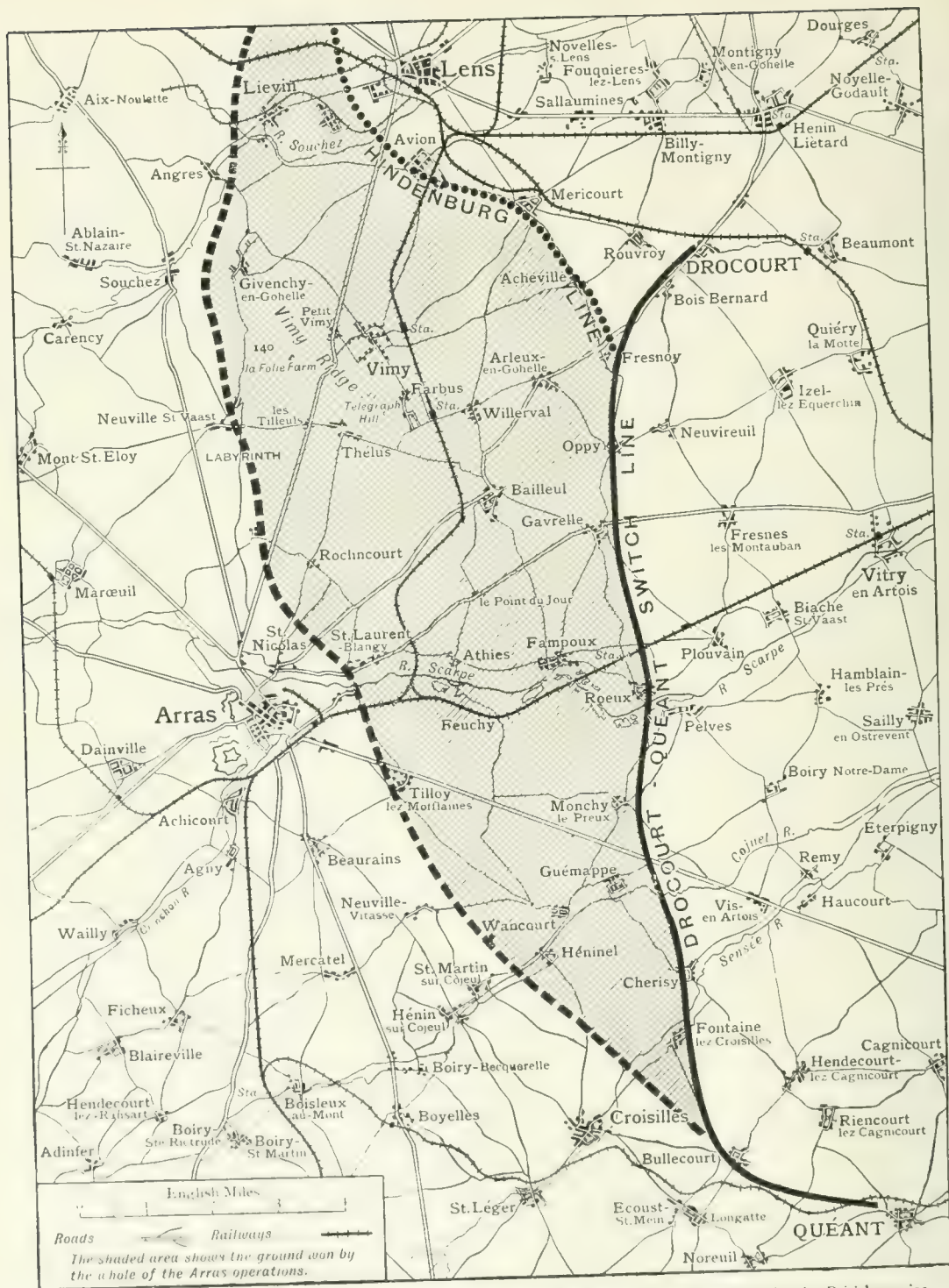
Enlarging the Arras Victory—Prepared Lines—Co-operation of Haig with the French—General Nivelle's Record—The Front from Soissons to Rheims—Chemin-des-Dames Position—German Defences—Nivelle's Plan—The First Pulse of the Attack—Attack on the Soupir Sector—Les Grignon's Check—First Day's Work—The Right Wing Attack towards Ville aux Bois—Russian Brigade at Courcy—Attacks of April 17 and 18—Germans ejected from the Aisne—Fall of Fort de Condé—German Counter-attacks on the Ridge—General Nivelle's Summary of Operations—The Cost of Victory—Pétain's Task—Craonne and the California Plateau—Laffaux Mill.

WITH the stabilization of the British hold on the Vimy Ridge the first purpose of the Battle of Arras was accomplished. It remained to be seen whether the tactical success could be used strategically, and to what extent. The value of the success tactically became apparent at once. The Germans, after the loss of the northernmost spurs, abandoned their intention of counter-attacking from the direction of Givenchy and Hirondelle woods, and cut their territorial losses by withdrawals which enabled the Canadians to occupy Givenchy-en-Gohelle, and other troops to seize in turn Petit Vimy, the adjacent village of Vimy, and on through Willerval to Bailleul. Still the German line rolled sullenly back, avoiding heavy fighting, except for a vicious counter-thrust, made in vain, to recover Monchy-le-Preux. The enemy left behind a great deal of ammunition of all calibres, abundance of stores, and a few guns.

While the northern sector of the British advance went on till it had submerged and taken the little town

of Lievin, the southern or right-hand sector, on the south of the Scarpe, was fighting its way eastwards down and along the defences of the Hindenburg line, not yet completely in order nor fully manned by the Germans. This pertinacious thrust paused in front of Fontaine-Jes-Croisilles, a fortified point which was destined to attain a much greater importance before the campaign of 1917 was ended. It is about 7 miles south-east of Arras, and on the right of what became the Cambrai salient. Its value was considerable to the Germans, even more so because Haig's troops had captured the high ground east of Heninel, which, had it fallen to us five or six days before, might have enabled the Third Army to join hands with the Fifth, and convert the German withdrawal into a calamitous defeat. The capture of this high ground was the result of a most skilful attack by a Northumberland brigade, which added Wancourt Tower, a nest of German machine-guns, to its trophies.

For the time being this represented



The Battlefield of Arras: map showing approximately (by the shaded portion) the ground won by the British armies up to the Hendenburg Line and its switch-line between Drocourt and Quéant, in the Battle of Arras

the high-water mark of the ground won by the Battle of Arras. The British front in a week's fighting had pushed solidly forward 4 miles east. The Third Army had captured all the dominating positions on the front, and their value was attested by the counter-attacks which the Germans had been obliged to expend on them, in order to contain the British while withdrawing the bulk of their forces behind their triple rampart lines. Now, however, that the Hindenburg line had received its own, and the Drocourt-Quéant switch-line was being completed in feverish haste, while German reserves were being poured out to stop Haig's threatening advance, the German defence began to stiffen, and the British offensive measures began to encounter new difficulties.

It was one of the most conspicuous and recurrent occurrences, in all the fighting on the Western Front, that however successful a local advance might be, it always reached a point where its momentum became exhausted, and the prospect opening out before it, of exchanging the system of attack resembling that on a fortress for the manœuvres and marching of field warfare, closed up again. This was in part due to the obligations which trench warfare, and the task of leaving one set of entrenched fortifications in order to attack another, imposed on the assailant of equipping himself with heavy guns. When he moved beyond the area of the ground which the action of these guns had helped him to conquer, he found himself held up by the corresponding artillery on the other side, as well as by the machine-

guns and artillery of smaller calibre which his own "heavies" could no longer silence. His own difficulties in transporting his guns, heavy or light, over ground broken, shell-pitted, and destroyed in the course of the fighting of the retreat, and of the advance, were multiplied, while that of the enemy were lessened because his roads and communications were less damaged the farther they were behind the first lines.

Only in the event of a break-through on a very large scale could these handicaps be altered; and they were not altered by the Battle of Arras, because that victory, considerable and valuable as it was, was not large enough in its objectives, or sudden enough in its effects, to disorganize the German preparedness to resist it or to lessen its results. Nevertheless, it had been a most brilliant piece of work, and it had amply fulfilled the object of creating a diversion of German force while the French High Command prepared to launch their main offensive from the Aisne. It had captured 13,000 prisoners and over 200 guns; it had driven a wide gap through the prepared German defences; and by so doing it had compelled the Germans to plug the breach with men.

The use of prepared lines is to economize men, and while holding the front lines lightly to accumulate depths of reserves behind them. When prepared lines are breached the device breaks down; more men must be thrown in than were there before, and if the attack on them is sustained the numbers of the defenders



British Official Photograph

The Hindenburg Defences. a captured 8-inch naval gun in its concrete emplacement

go on increasing. This was the secondary result of Sir Douglas Haig's success at Arras. Ten days after the opening of the British offensive the German infantry engaged on the front of our attack had been nearly doubled, in spite of the casualties which the enemy had suffered. Moreover, these troops were massed within reach of our guns, and had no competent defences and little shelter. They suffered heavily, and they had also to undertake counter-attacks, which were in themselves sacrifices, in order to slow down the British rate of advance.

Some further co-operation in aid of the French plan had been afforded by the Fourth and Fifth Armies, while the Third Army was engaged in its major operation. The unsuccessful

attempt to join hands with the Third Army by way of Heninel and Wancourt has been mentioned. There were others more continuous and less costly, as well as less vigorous, throughout the first half of April, by which some hundreds of prisoners were taken, and the British line pushed threateningly forward closer and closer to the Hindenburg defences. The Germans were probably not wholly in ignorance of the intentions of the British Commander or of the meaning of his tactics; they certainly could not have remained unaware that General Nivelle was massing men for an attack towards the centre of their line. Yet they could not be sure of what amount of co-operation Sir Douglas Haig was prepared to lend to the greater plan of

his French colleague, or what strength lay behind the British lines in the more southerly sectors. Consequently, on April 15, the day before the French attack was launched, what may not unfairly be described as a German reconnaissance in force was undertaken against the British front from Hermies to Noreuil. It was designed on the typical German scale, which never spoils an undertaking by entrusting it to insufficient forces, though it sometimes errs on the other side, and it was undertaken by forces estimated at sixteen battalions. In the heavy fighting which this assault evoked—entrusted to German “storming troops”—the British lines were penetrated at Lagnicourt by the more resolute of the “sturmtrouppen”. Some of them got as far as the more forward of our

batteries; but a counter-attack as resolute flung them out again. The attack began at 4.30 in the morning. By one o'clock in the day, after nine hours of fierce encounter, the German wave had receded to its starting-point, leaving 1700 dead and 360 prisoners among the positions which they had attacked. Before the German High Command had time to digest the information which this repulse afforded, the French attack had begun on their positions which barred the way to Laon.

A new Commander-in-Chief, General Nivelle, had been chosen by France for the great French attack of 1917, which marked the departure of the French from the policy of the limited offensive. The limited offensive had been the invention of General



Photograph by Corbis Out War Pictures

Cracking the Hindenburg Line. German concrete shelter smashed by British shell fire during the Battle of Arras.

Joffre, whose phrase "I nibble them" had passed into history; and he had modified it only in the Champagne offensive of 1915. That offensive, despite the prisoners and guns taken and the ground won, had been too costly for repetition. The front chosen was too narrow to disturb German responsive concentrations before the penetration was deep enough; it was at the same time too wide to permit of enough weight of guns and men to be massed by the French behind it. It was not, in short, heavy enough to break through; its momentum became expended; and, as it slowed, its losses began to mount. General Joffre had no mind to repeat the experiment.

In the following year, 1916, there was no great French offensive in the spring or summer, because from late February to early July their army became the "army of sacrifice" in the glorious resistance to the German onslaught at Verdun. But when the British attack on the Somme relieved the pressure of the German attack, the French rebounded like a spring released, and the recapture of Forts Douaumont and Vaux, with the later advance mapped out by General Nivelle in the early winter, put a new complexion on French hopes and gave a new direction to French strategy. General Nivelle, as he had been the victor in the renaissance at Verdun, was its protagonist. His theory was that losses are not incurred in going forward, but in the pause which follows the advance. If, therefore, the blow struck was swift enough it should succeed beyond its own expenditure of men in its destructive effect on the

enemy's man power. He believed also that the new employment of the creeping barrage, which the French artillery beyond any other had perfected, would enable such a blow to be struck on a large front, and at the most powerful obstacles, especially if the front could be prolonged in width by the British army. Hence the value of Sir Douglas Haig's co-operation. For the French army he designed the task of striking at a very formidable, perhaps the most formidable, sector of the German lines, considering that a successful blow here, however great the cost, must be disastrous in its effect on the enemy.

Nivelle's design was approved by the French civil power, which had at that time great confidence in General Nivelle on account of his recent success at Verdun and his consistent record during the war. He had fought well as a colonel of artillery under General Manoury at the battle of the Ourcq, and his coolness and intrepidity on the Aisne had made him a Brigadier-General. He won the approval of Castelnau by his work in 1915, and his management of the 3rd Corps, to which he was promoted under General Pétain, led to his appointment as Commander of the Verdun army when Pétain's task there was finished. On General Joffre's retirement he was promoted above the heads both of Foch and Pétain, probably because of his confidence that the hour had struck when the long trench warfare was to be exchanged for that of the war of manœuvre, and that the exchange was to be forced on the Germans by French valour—and French artillery.

There was only one place in which a blow such as General Nivelle projected could be struck at the Germans, unless he were content, as he was not, to act merely as support to the British plan of striking at the German right flank and compelling them to withdraw it from the sea. That point was in the direction of Laon from the heights of the Aisne, and was in effect the German right centre. If a breach could be effected here, then, both because it was a breach at the strongest point and because the lines of retreat were fewer than at any point farther east—such as at Verdun, or the St. Mihiel salient, or Nancy, or in Alsace—the victory would be correspondingly valuable. Moreover—and this was Nivelle's view as distinguished from that of Haig—if a commanding position could be won here, and firmly held, it would render any subsequent blow struck at the German's outside right in Flanders very much more lethal.

General Nivelle struck on April 16 and April 17, 1917, on a 50-mile front, stretching from north of Soissons to east of Rheims. The first part of the action began on the 16th, and comprised the ground from Laffaux above Soissons to Berry-au-Bac, where the line crossed the Aisne for the third time, and turned south-eastwards towards Rheims. The second part of the action, distinct from the first, though co-ordinated with it, began on the following day, and was directed towards the heights of Moronvilliers, east of Rheims. From the region assailed in the more westerly attack, the first of these actions is called that

of the Chemin-des-Dames, or, alternatively, the battle of Craonne, the small town which is on the easternmost spur of the Chemin-des-Dames ridge. The second battle, that of Moronvilliers, can be considered apart from this, and was of the nature of a supporting action which might in favourable circumstances develop into a major one.

The Battle of Craonne and the assault on the Chemin-des-Dames ridge and plateau remained the chief French attack of the year. This ridge stretches like a man's left wrist from Craonne to Laffaux, with the fist and knuckles to the south-west. Most of the wrist and the fist are north of the Aisne, here flowing almost due east to west, but the line held by the Germans, curving round the little finger and its knuckle, crossed the Aisne and occupied about 10 miles of the river's south bank from Missy-sur-Aisne, east of Soissons, to a part just east of Chavonne. The first purpose of the French was to release the Aisne from the pressure of this knuckle, and throw the Germans back across the river, and then make the French foothold secure on both banks of the Aisne by seizing the German positions on all the knuckles of the fist, and afterwards the wrist, along which ran the Chemin-des-Dames—the Ladies' Road from Laffaux to Craonne.

The French line, which can be followed by the aid of the map on p. 87, ran on the day preceding Nivelle's attack, as follows: From just below La Fère, on the flooded Oise, it followed the edges of the forests of St. Gobain and Coucy to the River Ailette,

passing through Quincy, just north of that river, and Vauxaillon, just south of it. Thence it passed west of Laffaux and Margival, and had been pressed back from the Aisne, which once it had covered, to Vregny and to Missy. The old Fort de Condé had here been left in German hands, and the French line failed to take the south bank of the river, which the Germans here strongly held for about 8 miles from Condé to beyond Chavonne. It would be hard to dislodge the Germans from this hold while they had the protection of the wooded spurs of the heights of the Aisne (the knuckles of the fist) behind them. They average about 400 feet in height, and present steep rounded sides to the south.

Where the line recrossed the Aisne above Chavonne, it struck back eastwards of these spurs towards the hog-back ridge of which they were the extremity, passing Soupир and Moussy and holding a post above Troyon, which Haig's troops had won in the long-distant battle of the Aisne. But the whole of the rest of the hog's back was in German hands. The French line left the plateau here, and was continued east and south-east to Berry-au-Bac, where the Aisne was crossed again, and so towards Rheims. On the other side of Rheims it went south of the Nogent-l'Abbesse heights, whence the Germans directed their fire on Rheims Cathedral, and below the fork of the Moronvilliers ridge to the River Suippe.

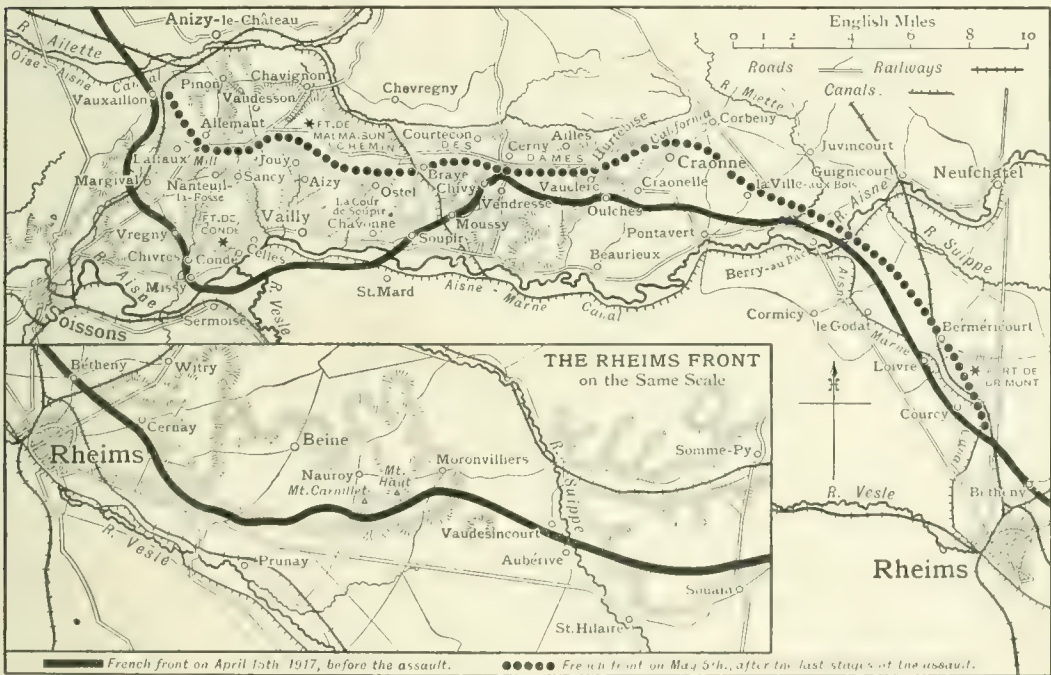
The hardest of the German positions to assail were the westernmost, which have been described as the

knuckles, though a French foothold on these Aisne heights was a necessary preliminary to the ejection of the Germans from the south bank of the Aisne. The French had a spring-board in their possession of a part of the Vregny plateau, which was opposite the strong spur of Nanteuil-la-Fosse, and so could assault from the west. But the other spurs of this group, the Fort de Condé spur, the Vailly spur, the Soupир spur, were protected from assault by the Aisne itself, which here the Germans held on both banks. All the villages near the river—Condé, Celles, Vailly, as well as those of Aizy, Ostel, Sancy, Braye, ensconced in the spurs and near the ridge—had been elaborately fortified.

The position was a natural Hindenburg line reinforced with all the German knowledge of position and fortification. It was more vulnerable on its eastern side, where the French line recrossed the Aisne, for here, besides that long-held post at Troyon, on the ridge, they were on the eastern slopes of the spurs at Soupир and Moussy, and had a pathway traced for them between two of them in the valley leading up the Braye. Braye is on the ridge, and beneath it and the ridge passes, by a tunnel, the canal which links the Oise to the Aisne. Notwithstanding this opening for an assault, it was evident that the whole position would have to be attacked on both sides at once, and the magnitude of that operation became apparent when the distance between Laffaux on the west and Braye on the east is considered. It is 12 miles. All of

it had been carefully studied by the Germans; they had excavated tunnels to supplement the quarries and the natural caves with which the heights abound; they had supplied concrete forts, barbed-wire entanglements, and had shaved the woods where they would afford any help to attack or any hindrance to their own field of fire.

The German position east of the Chemin - des - Dames ridge, from Craonne through Betheny above Rheims, and thence to Souain, was of a very different kind. Craonne, strongly fortified by them, was on high ground, but below it the flat and marshy plain was broken only by the low hills of Ville-aux-Bois. Berry-au-



Map illustrating the French Attack on the Chemin-des-Dames Ridge, April 15-May 5, 1917

East of this tremendous position is the hog's back plateau, narrowing to as little as 100 yards at its highest point, Hurtebise Farm, widening at Craonnelle, narrowed again at the eastern end, where are the California and the Casemates positions above Craonne. Evidently it would be useful to capture this section as a preliminary to forcing the knuckles of the fist. The slopes there were very steep.

Bac marked the part where the opposed German and French lines crossed the Aisne again, and more flat country succeeded that north of the river. The first heights encountered were those of Brimont and Fresne, near the canal joining the Aisne to the Marne, and in German hands. Then came the Nogent-l'Abbesse cluster of hills north by east of Rheims, and after them the Moronvilliers heights. The lines then were continued to Auberive on the

Suippe. General Nivelle's plan—to recapitulate it—was to attack the great Chemin-des-Dames position on the three sides in any way accessible to him, on April 16, while bursting into the Champagne plain between Craonne and Brimont. On April 17 another army was to attack the German position east of Rheims in the neighbourhood of Moronvilliers. That secondary assault must be described separately.

The precedents of attack have altered continually during the war, varying from long artillery preparations to concentrated vehemence of fire, and even to an almost complete absence of preliminary shelling when an effect of surprise was aimed at. General Nivelle's method was on the grand scale characteristic of an attempt which he hoped would prove decisive. The artillery bombardment, from Vauxaillon to Rheims, began on April 6. It lasted therefore ten days. Conformably to the ill-fortune which dogged both French and British attacks during the rest of the year, rain and poor visibility spoilt its effectiveness in the culminating stage. Rain and snow fell heavily on the night preceding the dawn of the attack, and after a few hours of clear sky the clouds descended once more on the attack itself, which began at six o'clock in the morning.

The first break of the attack was north of the Ailette, possibly a feint, in the Coucy forest region; south of it a French colonial force struck a real and heavy blow at Laffaux and the plateau below it. They got to their objectives, Vauxaillon, Moisy Farm, Laffaux—but could not hold



Interior of Richebourg Church, wrecked by German Shells

them. This was the assault from the west.

The other arm of the attack, the easterly one, from the Aisne crossing by Chavonne to Craonne, was in action all day. It proceeded in pulses, so as to bewilder the enemy as to the point of greatest pressure, and the attempt to throw the Germans back over the Aisne from the middle part of their salient, Missy to Chavonne, was postponed till Chavonne itself had been captured, together with the wooded spur of Soupir Farm behind it. The village of Soupir the French held.

This was a tremendous task, because Chavonne itself was heavily garrisoned and fortified, and in the

buttress cliffs behind it and behind Soupir were cliff-like projections deeply pitted with caves, and several of them, from their strength, natural and artificial, dignified with names like fortresses, such as Le Balcon, Les Grinons, and Les Bois des Gouttes D'Or, with Mount Sapin behind. Systems of trenches were similarly designated, and embraced the Tirpitz, the Werther, and the Deutsche Friede. These and the quarries and the wire entanglements the French guns had been searching for days; trenches and wire and woods had been scattered to dust, and hundreds of Germans, as was afterwards found, stifled by the gas shells in the caves. Yet the strength of the positions was not much diminished in essentials; the caves, tunnels, and villages held thousands of Germans in readiness for counter-attack; and the heights always afforded direct observation of French movements. It was not a position

that could be rushed; as it turned out, it could only be won by the bitterest fighting.

The two French divisions to which were given the task of the assault in Chavonne, the Grinons, Mount Sapin, and the contiguous heights, crossed the Aisne, but were immediately held up at the foot of the Grinons. A battalion burst through Chavonne and struggled on to the Deutsche Friede trench, which, if carried, would have laid the Grinons open to the other French assaulters. But the German counter-attack held up this attempt too, and night fell with a French division badly mauled and the positions aimed at still in German hands.

On the right the position was a little better; a Chasseur battalion had gone behind their barrage through the Tirpitz and Werner trenches, bombed their way over the Deutsche Friede, and scaled Mount Sapin. Continuing their remarkable feat, they spread out

towards the Grinons on the one side, and to the farm on the Soupir height on the other. The latter part of their feat had been accomplished without help from their own artillery; they were now subjected to a heavy machine-gun fire from German shelters, and had to sustain one counter-attack after another. They held their ground all night, and beat off the last German counter-attack



Carried in the French Assault on April 10, 1918, one of the German concrete machine-gun nests.

at dawn on the next day. Some of their companies were commanded by non-commissioned officers when day broke on the victorious remnants. Their feat had been supported by other assaults less remarkable, but not less useful, on Le Balcon, and by a regiment which succeeded in advancing some way towards Braye and up the canal valley which runs between the Soupir and Chivy heights. The ground at nightfall won on this confused sector took in the southern and western slopes of the Grinons, half of Chavonne, Mount Sapin, Le Balcon, and the approaches to the Soupir crest.

A second pulse of the attack had begun three hours after the first on the spur between Braye and Chivy, and was also directed from the old foothold at Troyon towards the Chemin-des-Dames ridge. It captured the summit above Chivy, and caught 200 Germans in a tunnel.

A third pulse, which, however, did not start at 9 a.m. but earlier, was the most successful, territorially, of all. Two army corps had been thrown eastwards, instead of westwards, against the narrow ridge of Chemin-des-Dames heights. The German claim that components of the assaulters had been bloodily repulsed was only too true. Nevertheless, they captured Hurtebise Farm, the highest point of the ridge, and established touch between Craonelle and Craonne, where the last sector of the attack had crossed flat and marshy ground before fighting their way into the ruins of Craonne and holding fast to their lodgment there. The temperate French *communiqué*, summing up the day's work,

claimed that all the first-line German positions had been captured, which was true, but the course of the action and its cost were very different from the victories which General Nivelle had planned and won at Douaumont and Bézonvaux. The losses at Laffaux were heavy; those on the heights above Chavonne heavier still.

Apart from the assault on the western and eastern heights of the ridge, another sector in the 50-mile front, and one which belonged to the Chemin-des-Dames battle rather than to the Moronvilliers front, was in action. This was the thrust east of Craonne in the flat lands towards Juvincourt, and comprising Ville-aux-Bois. The attack extended southwards beyond Berry-au-Bac on the Aisne to Berméricourt and a point on the Aisne - Marne Canal between Loivre and Courcy, opposite the Fort de Brimont and its height. This front, to conform to the metaphor employed, was like the forearm belonging to the wrist, dipping south-eastwards to the elbow at Rheims; and success here was dependent on the wrist at Craonne being firmly held by the assailants. Half-way between Craonne and the Aisne were the two German strongholds, the Bois-des-Buttes and the Bois-des-Boches at Ville-aux-Bois. These had to be captured, for otherwise no attack north of them could succeed while the Germans in Craonne could pump a stream of enfilading shells on the French trying to pass north of them. On the 16th, therefore, the French attacked these two humps, and meanwhile sustained and repelled a German counter-attack between them and Craonne.

The twin humps of Ville-aux-Bois formed a very important position, because they were an obstacle to Nivelle's attempt to burst through into the open plain. A Parisian regiment (31st Infantry) was given the heavy task of assaulting these heights from south and west, with the aim of working round them. The French trenches were less than half a mile away from them, and the Parisians went over the parapet behind the six-o'clock barrage. In six hours they had bayoneted and bombed their way over the Bois-des-Buttes and stifled numbers of Germans in their dug-outs. They held out against every counter-attack and were in possession next morning. Bavarians clung, however, to the ruins of the village of Ville-aux-Bois and to the Bois-des-Buttes, and the French still could not advance on the northern flank while Craonne was held against them. The advance would have to work round by the south, along the Miette stream, on which Juvincourt stands.

South of Berry-au-Bac and the Aisne the second and larger section of the fight on the forearm was being waged with more immediate gains. Here the Brimont heights and the neighbouring forts which the Germans held were the obstacles corresponding to the Ville-aux-Bois heights north of the Aisne; and the expectation of the French was to turn these fortifications by carrying Loivre and Berméricourt. The chief attack was to be launched north of these from the neighbourhood of Le Godat, while another attack was to engage the attention of the Germans south of the heights. In the

second or less heavy of these attacks a Russian brigade, with the French troops on its left and right was employed, and, starting from the neighbourhood of Courcy, more than fulfilled its mission.

The principal attack was a business after Nivelle's own heart: the kind of dashing success which a commander sees in his dreams. The French from Le Godat took the first German line in half an hour, and in twenty minutes more were moving on the wood behind. They cleared it by hand-to-hand fighting, and chased the Germans to the railway embankment in front of Berméricourt. While one regiment took the ruins and 400 prisoners surrendering there, another detachment spread along the railway as far as Loivre. Other two regiments had seized Loivre itself, not without a four-and-a-half-hours' struggle; but they captured 800 prisoners with their prize.

The Russian brigade under Lochwitsky showed what Russian soldiers could do when led by a man and uncorrupted by traitors. They were given the village and mansion of Courcy to take, and so impetuously did they leave their trenches that the German shells which came over in response to the French barrage fell behind the first wave of the Russians. The second wave was caught, but it went bravely on through the shell-bursts, caught up the first, and helped it to carry the first and second line. Theirs was one of the hardest tasks given to any brigade, but by nightfall they took Courcy and its great house, and held them both. This, together



French soldier looking on as German machine gunner firing from trench behind a heavily built French fortification.

with some similar if less important fighting between Courcy and Betheny, sums up the assaults of the Chemin-des-Dames battle on April 16. French tanks had been employed on the front facing the plain, but had not been very successful: they were speedier, but less heavy than the British type. Some 11,000 Germans had been taken prisoners in the first day's assaults, the larger number between Hurtebise and Courcy.

On the 17th the second stage of the offensive opened with the Moronvilliers battle, directed by General Anthoine, and supervised by General Pétain, east of Rheims. That, as already mentioned, must be considered separately. The Chemin-des-Dames battle continued in weather even more disconcerting than on the opening day. The first success won was at the costly obstacle of the Grinons in the tumble of heights above Chavonne. It changed hands more than once, and it did not fall till dusk of the pouring April day. But with its capture the position of the Germans in Chavonne itself became precarious; and so did that of other Germans sequestered in the cover of the heights. Towards evening also the French got a firm hold of the Bois des Gouttes d'Or and of Mount Sapin. Elsewhere they were digging themselves in, bringing up fresh men and material, and repulsing counter-attacks from Chavonne to Hurtebise, and from Craonne to Courcy. They were cheered by hearing that General Anthoine's attack east of Rheims was going well.

When dusk closed down into night

the attack blazed up again and continued all next day, April 18. The first telling success was won at the extreme west of the position, the points of the knuckles, where French infantry, protected by cavalry on the south, broke through at Laffaux, crossed the plateau of Vregny and the valley between it and the next spur, and finally stormed Nanteuilla-Fosse, which crowned that adjacent height. The capture of this point made the position of the Germans, who held the Fort de Condé just north of the river, one of almost inextricable difficulty, and threatened the whole of the German salient on the south bank of the river. Difficulty was increased to danger by an assault on this salient, which was undertaken by one of these splendid French army corps whose deeds have shone from the Marne right through the war. The "iron divisions" crossed the Aisne near Celles, which is just east of Condé, and pushed north and south along the river till they came to Vailly, where they were met by other thrusters, who had reached that crossing from the south. Between them they occupied Vailly, and compelled the two Saxon regiments holding it to retreat to the protection of the wooded heights. But retreat was by this time too late, for long before Vailly had been captured, and, in fact, in the darkness before dawn, other French troops had reached Chavonne, and by morning light had mounted the corresponding spur beyond, and were coming down on the village of Ostel. The Ostel garrison was able to retreat; the Ger-

mans from Vailly were caught and compelled to surrender. With Vailly, Celles, and Chavonne gone, the German salient south of the river had vanished.

Meanwhile the French were eating into other portions of the fist. They got into Braye before dawn, and captured the plateau beyond. Every German in Chivy had been killed or taken prisoner, and something like a panic appears to have seized the garrison at finding that their positions in the "mailed fist" were not impregnable. The 18th saw the French in possession of most of the westerly Chemin-des-Dames ridge from Laffaux to Nanteuil, from Ostel to Braye and Troyon. The Germans defending the Condé Fort and spur were, as already noted, in a very perilous position.

On the eastern sector of the battle, during the operations of the 17th-18th, the gains of the previous day were confirmed, though the German commanders were now thoroughly awake to the nature of the French intentions. In the night a French battalion had completed the encirclement of Ville-aux-Bois, and by morning light the village and the appropriately named Bois-des-Boches had become a French wood once again. This was all the work of the famous Parisian regiment which had first taken the task in hand. The portion firmly held was at once turned to account. In the afternoon of the 18th a powerful German counter-attack was sent in from between Juvincourt and the Miette River, and on either side of the main road to

Ville-aux-Bois; but it withered under the French fire. The Russian brigade from Courcy pushed a little farther east, and took a few more prisoners.

Next day, April 19, the action on the extreme west of the Chemin-des-Dames position pursued its expected course. The Fort de Condé, surrounded, and wrecked by French heavy artillery, was blown up by the garrison, which had held out bravely enough to the last possible moment, and, indeed, beyond it, for the survivors who attempted to escape up the ridge were caught by the French fire, and very few escaped. With the fall of this stronghold the German hold on the banks of the Aisne disappeared, a last remnant surrendered at Celles, and the river was free from the Oise to Berry-au-Bac. The Germans were still fleeing the heights to the broadest part of the Chemin-des-Dames plateau at its north-west extremity; the French, on their heels, occupied Aizy and Jouy, which is westwards of Aizy and below the last westerly spur. At Hurtebise Farm more prisoners were captured from the tunnels. On the eastern side of the battle-field a little progress was made south of the Aisne.

Operations on the following day (20th) were of a similar kind, but were still further slowed down. A few prisoners were captured on every sector of the front as it was cleared up, but there was nowhere any clear way open to the French to break through. On the contrary, the Germans were rallying to the counter-attack; and though the counter-attacks were beaten off they were an earnest of the ability and determination of the Germans to

feed the front that had been weakened, by loss of positions, with reserves of men. One might say that on the 20th-21st came a pause in the battle while the French began the consolidation of their positions, running up new light railways to the Aisne from the south, and advancing their heavy artillery. Little gains were made here and there, ground improved especially towards the highest part of the hog's-back ridge and on the eastern front. The Germans were also bringing up men to hold back any farther advance, and were meanwhile engaging the attention of the French with counter-attacks, a necessary form of expense.

As after events proved, it was a justifiable and even profitable form of expenditure, if judged not by its material gains but by its effect on French policy. These German efforts were accompanied by a telegram from the Kaiser to the Crown Prince, nominally in charge of the German armies conducting the defence. It stated in exalted language that the troops of the German peoples had with steel-hard determination brought to naught the French attempt to break through on the Aisne and in Champagne. Rather different was the dry summary which General Nivelle published at the end of the second week (April 28) of what his armies had done. (His account takes in the Moronvilliers battle east of Rheims, not dealt with in this chapter.) He had driven the Germans from the Aisne and from the spurs of the heights of the Aisne leading to the river; sections of the plateau of the Chemin-des-Dames were in French

hands. The Germans still held the westerly and easterly extremities of the ridge, and the valuable eastern stronghold of Craonne. That last-named holding had held up the French advance between the ridge and Ville-aux-Bois in the plain. From Ville-aux-Bois to the Aisne Nivelle's troops were through the German first- and second-line defences; but the Brimont heights were still German. (Progress had been made on the other side of Rheims towards the Moronvilliers heights, but the heights had not been won.) The captures of the French Armies in the fighting amounted to 20,780 prisoners, 175 guns of all calibres, 119 trench mortars, 412 machine-guns.

But the cost had been very great to the French. There had been the heavy losses when two divisions were held up before the Grinons, the almost equally heavy losses to the Colonial division which had begun the first assault east of Vauxaillon and Laffaux. They were losses spoken of long afterwards, and attributed to various causes; they were spoken of almost immediately in the French Chamber. In a word, General Nivelle's method had proved too costly for a country which for three years of war had suffered the cruellest losses. General Nivelle's victory was followed by a re-arrangement of the High Command; and in effect General Pétain assumed it, till General Foch came back some fortnight later. The prospect of any renewal of an offensive on the grand scale retreated from sight in mere readjustments. Pétain's task was that of such careful husbanding of his

soldiers as was compatible with the retention and improvement of the ground won.

The decision was inevitable; and the rest of the story of the Chemin-des-Dames Battle is that of the endeavour of the French High Command to assume and retain such posi-

From the direction of Berry-au-Bac, some 5 miles from Craonne, another French attack was delivered on a $2\frac{1}{2}$ -mile front, and while this attack was in progress a daring assault was delivered on Craonne. Two companies of *poilus* got through Craonne, and, despite the machine-guns hidden in



A Corner of the French Battle-front: waiting for the order to advance French Official Photograph

tions as should force the Germans to counter-attack and yet pay a high price for the offensive. The inwardness of this policy did not become at once visible. On the Monday (April 30) following the Saturday of the fateful decision, the position at Moronvilliers, which had been under Pétain's eye, was improved by an assault; and at the end of the week (May 4 and 5) a swift French thrust was delivered on the Chemin des Dames front.

every cave, reached the California plateau above the village, and held on there all night. This plateau was the Spion Kop of the position; the soldiers who clung there were shelled all night.

At dawn a French bombardment broke out on the whole length of the ridge from Vauxaillon on the west to Craonne on the east; but it was these two extremities which formed the French objectives. East of Vaux-

aillon is the spur Hill 157; about it and protecting the way to Fort de Malmaison on the crest of the ridge were ranges of trenches with a background of quarries; the whole maze being dotted or pitted with concrete pill-boxes and dug-outs. The fighting for this maze of defences, of which a vital point was Laffaux Mill, and others—the Fruty and Allemant quarries—raged over trenches distinguished by names such as Rouge Gorge, Mole, Moussy, and La Rade. Picked troops from the 4th, 9th, 11th dismounted Cuirassiers began their desperate attempt just when darkness was giving place to light, and though they cleared the Rouge Gorge trench at once it was nearly five hours before the major part of the trench system was cleared up.

Round Laffaux Mill the struggle was as bloody; and at ten o'clock, though the mill was won and the Fruty quarries cleaned out by grenades, the La Rade trench still held fighting Germans. Reinforcements were pushed up by the attackers, the Allemant quarries were added to the bag; but the last hill but one of the ridge (above the westernmost Hill 157) could not be seized, and the last trench still held out. But other useful progress was made to the immediate east of the chief objective, by French troops pushing up from Nanteuil la Fosse on to Chemin-des-Dames ridge. At the other end of it the advantage gained previously at Craonne was extended westwards till the whole stretch from Craonne to Cerny was held. In one of the tunnels captured here were 300 German dead, stifled by gas.

On Sunday, May 6, the Cuirassiers who had won Laffaux Mill, supported by the troops which had pushed up from Nanteuil la Fosse, made another attempt to obtain the hill in front of Malmaison, but were stopped short of success by one of those circumstances which are occasionally inevitable in attacking in these confused and quarried places, where the work must be done by grenade and bayonet against hidden machine-guns. The Cuirassiers cleared the Allemant quarries, but the division on their right could not get up to support them. Consequently they had to halt and dig themselves in under concentrated and deadly fire. They held on till dark, and would have held on till dawn but the risks were too great. They were withdrawn. Thus, though Laffaux Mill and the heights immediately beyond were held and retained, the last hill which the French desired was not attained.

At this part the consideration of the French battle of the Chemin-des-Dames-Craonne properly ceases. The capture of the Laffaux Mill and height on the west of the ridge, and Craonne on the eastern extremity, gave the French command of most of it. Below the ridge on the plain, the capture of Ville-aux-Bois and its two heights opened a way to the Plain of Laon; south of the Aisne the German position at Brimont was jeopardized. The battle of Moronvilliers had brought other gains which, as will presently be shown, were a threat to the German hold on Rheims.

CHAPTER VII

MINOR NAVAL OPERATIONS

(June, 1916-December, 1917)

The Limits of the Subject—The Main Tasks of the British Navy—Blockade—Transport—The Success achieved—Protection of Trade—Loss and Disturbance—Redistribution of Shipping—Pre-dominance of the Submarine—U 35, U 53, and the *Deutschland*—Two Phases of the Submarine War—The Balance of Loss—The Service of the Cruisers—Convoy—The Scandinavian Convoys—A Series of Raids—The Action of April 20, 1917, off Dover.

WE take up again the story of submarines, mines, and raids, which we left on the eve of the Jutland battle.¹ Operations classed under these heads are to be defined as minor in the sense that they would not of themselves decide the victory. The Germans did rely on their submarines to inflict such a measure of loss on British commerce as would force this country to yield. They could not, indeed, suppose that they would absolutely destroy our merchant shipping; but they did openly avow their belief that they would so far reduce British tonnage engaged in carrying merchandise, or in importing food and raw material, as to compel the Government to withdraw a great number of ships from the task of transporting troops and supplies for the armies abroad. If they had met with the measure of success they expected to achieve, then the submarine campaign would have attained to the level of a major operation.

Their efforts were persistent, and were made on a great scale. Neutral trade was subjected to the same treatment as Allied. We have only to

note that between August 17, 1914, and September, 1916, no less than 61 Swedish vessels, of 73,000 tons in all, were destroyed by them—together with 222 lives—to learn with what an utter disregard of humanity and the interest of neutrals the German policy was carried out. And this was but the smaller part of the Swedish loss during the period covered by this chapter, while other nations were even greater sufferers. The measures adopted by the Germans grew more drastic as time went on. After February 1, 1917, they openly declared that they would no longer observe even the hardly perceptible limits they professed to have respected so far. Yet they never succeeded either in stopping British trade, or in seriously hampering the transport of troops and munitions of war. Therefore, though great damage, both direct and indirect, was done, the submarine campaign was never able to pass beyond being a minor operation.

The first weeks of the period now to be studied contained two events which may be named because they happened on the sea. But, as they have been fully dealt with under other heads, they need only be noted here

¹ Cf. Vol. V, Chapter XVII.

—the loss of H.M.S. *Hampshire*, and the death of Lord Kitchener, on June 6, 1916, and the capture of the S.S. *Brussels* on the 23rd, which was followed by the execution of her captain, Fryatt.¹

There is such a thing as losing sight of the wood because of the trees. The oversight is peculiarly liable to be made when the subjects on hand are the minor operations of war. If recorded in the order of time they appear to be isolated, and even to have no necessary connection with one another. We must provide ourselves with a central connecting thread, on which we can place the events in their due relation to the whole of the war. What connects all the minor incidents of the operations at sea is the steady maintenance of our power to use the sea, firstly for the purpose of putting pressure by direct military action on the Central Powers, and secondly in order to carry on the business of the country.

We may say to begin with that the application of the pressure was achieved in two ways, by the blockade which suspended German trade and by the transport and supply of troops engaged in the very various scenes of the war. The blockade forms a subject to be treated by itself. Only the general result can be stated here, and it was that German trade was annihilated save where it was conducted over land frontiers which the Allies could not reach. Even there it would be restricted. The effectual support and supply of the armies was a more visible achievement. It can be most

effectively recorded in the words of the "War Cabinet Report" for the year 1917. It was indeed "a stupendous amount of work", for

"There had been transported overseas up till the end of August—the last date for which complete statistics are available—some

"13 million human beings—combatants, wounded, medical personnel, refugees, prisoners, &c.;

"2 million horses and mules;

"½ million vehicles;

"25 million tons of explosives and supplies for the armies; and also some 51 million tons of coal and oil fuel for the use of our fleets, our armies, and to meet the needs of our Allies."

And this transport was effected with a very small loss of life—3500 casualties, in all of which 2700 were caused by the action of the enemy. It is plain, therefore, that with all their strenuous exertions the Central Powers were utterly unable to interfere seriously with the command of the sea. We could not, indeed, keep them off it entirely, but we did utterly baffle their best efforts to interrupt our communications. Command of the sea means the power to use the communications.

If we turn from the service of the armies to the maintenance of trade, we find that when the German sub-

¹ Cf. Vol. VI, Chapter V and Chapter VII.
² The 13 million human beings of this list must not be understood as meaning 13 million different persons, but only that number of passages. The same person might go to and fro several times, and would be counted separately for each journey. The same caution may be given for the understanding of the figures of "entrances and clearances" of ships. 5000 entrances and clearances do not mean 5000 different ships, since the same vessel may be in and out of port, or even of two or three ports, in a short time, and would be counted as so many entrances and so many clearances.

marine campaign was just coming to its height—that is to say, in the week ending on February 24, 1917—the total entrances and clearances recorded were 4541. One year later—in the week ending on February 16, 1918—the figure was 4715. There had been large fluctuations in the interval, but it is manifest that the enemy's submarines had not succeeded during twelve months of effort in inflicting crippling loss. They did cause loss and disturbance of a serious kind, but they did not produce the ruin they aimed at inflicting.

And here it is appropriate to state what the amount of loss and disturbance they did succeed in causing amounted to. The first is more easily stated. A White Paper issued by the Government on March 21, 1918 (Cd 9009), gives the figures. The whole is not to be attributed to the activity of the German and Austrian submarines. We must here include the latter, which were busy in the Mediterranean. Between the beginning of the war and the end of February, 1918, there were lost in all by enemy action and dangers of the sea 7,079,462 tons gross of British shipping. But this figure must not be taken by itself. The loss was not the total amount of tonnage destroyed, but the difference between that and the amount built. Now the amount built was 3,031,535 tons, and then we had captured and could make use of 780,000 tons of German shipping. The balance against us was therefore 3,267,907 tons. This was a very serious loss, for it amounted to not much less than a fifth of the total tonnage available by us for oversea

commerce (apart from the coasting trade and fisheries) when the war began in 1914. The number of British craft of all kinds which had disappeared was 1300. To complete the picture, and show the real meaning of these figures, we must include foreign losses and gains. The total then of foreign loss was 4,748,080 tons. Against this we have to set off 3,574,720 tons of new construction and 1,809,000 tons of German shipping captured. Together they amount to 5,383,720 tons. So that foreign shipping made a net gain of 635,640 tons, while British shipping suffered a net loss of 3,267,907 tons. It follows that the net loss of the world (2,632,297 tons) fell wholly on British shipping.

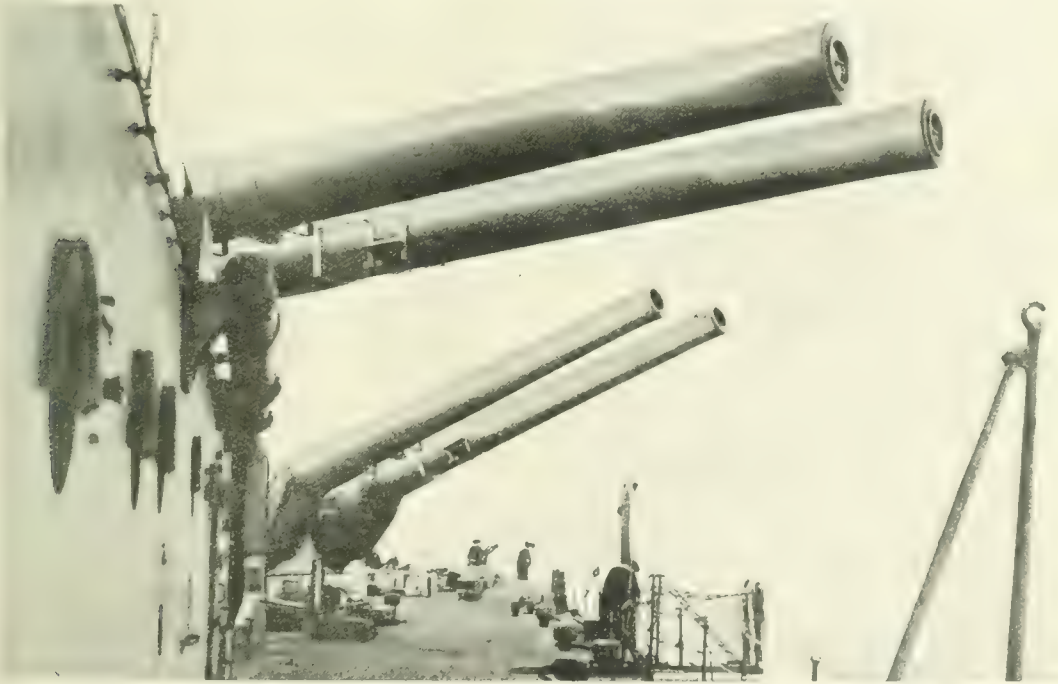
There had never been a naval war in which so great a proportion of British shipping had perished. And this was the direct, which entailed an indirect loss. Since there were fewer ships left to employ in carrying cargoes, and the demands of the armies in the field and of our Allies for British tonnage tended rather to increase than to diminish, it became necessary to sacrifice such branches of our trade as could be spared in order to preserve those which were indispensable. As a steamer could perform seven or eight voyages in the North Atlantic in the time which would be required to do three to the Antipodes, it is obvious that every 1000 tons could be used more than twice as often for the first as it could for the second. The food and raw material drawn from America were of vital importance. Therefore it was that we were forced to renounce the long voyages even at

the cost of what was, admittedly, a serious sacrifice.

Much food which Australia and New Zealand could have provided, both grain and meat, could not be obtained. Those colonies themselves suffered from the reduction of their imports, and as a natural consequence

theirs was entirely destroyed, except in the Baltic.

The King paid a visit to the Grand Fleet during the last week of June, 1917. If we except the short interlude supplied by the Jutland battle,¹ the great collection of squadrons which represented the main force of the



The British Navy's Voice in the Great War: 15-inch guns in the upper and lower forward turrets of a battleship pointing to starboard

had to face a diminution of the revenue which they drew from import duties. And this was the direct and injurious consequence of the commerce-destroying operations of the enemy. We cannot say that they did no harm, but only that they failed to create the ruin they were meant to produce. We may add that there was no parity between their achievement and ours. Our overseas commerce was damaged:

British Navy had been condemned to a service which was as monotonous as it was vital. It could do no more than watch for the enemy and stand ready to deal with him if he did come out. The King's visit, besides being a welcome relief to his officers and men, was of the nature of a reminder to the country of the predominant im-

¹ The story of the Jutland battle will be dealt with in due course among the major naval operations of the war.

portance of the Fleet. The inspections which His Majesty carried out culminated on June 24 in the march past and investiture on the flagship of thirty-eight officers with decorations.

A march past, which is carried out on a flagship by contingents from each of the ships in a fleet, is naturally a very different thing from a march past on shore. The ceremony of investiture was disturbed by a sudden break in the weather, which made it necessary to seek the protection of the shelter deck. Admiral Sir David Beatty was created G.C.B. and Admiral Evan-Thomas K.C.B. The knighthood was conferred with Sir David Beatty's sword, at his request, in memory of the fine support which Admiral Evan-Thomas—then in command of the *Queen Elizabeth*—had given to the battle-cruiser squadron. Admirals Madden and Doveton Sturdee received the K.C.M.G. Rear-Admirals Nicholson and Gaunt, two commodores, five captains, one engineer captain, and two fleet paymasters were decorated with the C.B.

The royal visit to the Grand Fleet was followed by another inspection of the cruiser squadrons and then of the destroyers. In these cases the weather was more favourable. The whole series of ceremonies served to give the world a demonstration of the extent of the naval effort made by Great Britain from the day the war began.

These being the general results down to the period under review, we have now to see how the struggle was waged. The predominant figure of the whole strife was the submarine,

German surface craft won successes from time to time in the North Sea and the Atlantic, but all they were able to effect was a comparatively small matter. The real formidable enemy was the submarine. From the day when the three Cressys were sunk (September 22, 1914) the German Government turned its attention to the development of these craft. They grew in size till they exceeded 1000 tons, in speed till they could steam 18 knots an hour on the surface and 11 or 12 below. They began to carry guns which were formidable even to small armed ships. They were heard of and felt from the arctic waters of the Russian coast to the Equator, from the depth of the Mediterranean to the shores of New England.

This progress of the submarine can be illustrated from the first half of our period. On June 23, 1916, the U 35, a submarine of 832 tons, carrying a crew of 30 men, and commanded by Lieutenant von Arnault, visited Cartagena in Spain. The officer's excuse for the visit was that he had to deliver an autograph letter from the Kaiser to King Alfonso XIII thanking him for help rendered to German refugees in Africa. Lieutenant von Arnault left very quickly, and within a few days had destroyed a longish list of Italian, French, Greek, and British sailing ships or steamers. On October 7 of the same year the U 53, commanded by Captain Hans Rose, turned up at Newport in Rhode Island. He left three days later, and within a few hours had sent down 24,000 tons of British, Dutch, and Norwegian shipping—the first because

they were enemies, the second on the charge of carrying contraband. Between these incidents (on July 11) three armed trawlers were sunk by the fire of two German submarines in the North Sea.

It is obvious that a submarine which can destroy with gun and torpedo has a far greater extent of power for all purposes than one confined to the use of her torpedoes, of which she carries few—only four to eight—and they are very costly. The visit of U 53 to Rhode Island had apparently some connection with the voyages of the trading submarine *Deutschland* (Captain Koenig), which made two voyages to the States, one in the summer (July and August), and one in the autumn (October and November) of 1916. She brought out chemicals and securities to be used to keep up German credit in America. She carried back rubber or nickel. But this attempt to carry on trade by means of a vessel which can avoid blockade, though it seemed to be the beginning of a great novelty in naval warfare had no results.¹

The story of the submarine war in our period can be divided into two parts by a line drawn at February 1, 1917. The first may be named "The Preparation", and the second "The Execution". It is true that the Germans were not idle before February, 1917, far from it; but they were not prepared to make the utmost use of their weapon. As early as July, 1916, the well known German writer on

naval affairs, Captain Persius, did indeed announce that, as Germany now had the needful submarines, the time had come to employ them to the utmost in order to force Great Britain "to follow the rules of International Law", and also "to prevent munitions from reaching France". But his Government was not yet prepared to go all lengths. A rapid chronological list of the chief performances of the submarines till February, 1917, will show that they were continuously and universally active. As the operations were everywhere the same, and as the sea is one undivided theatre of war, we need not consider locality.

During the first half of July, 1916, German submarines sallying from Zeebrugge assailed British and neutral shipping, as in the case of the S.S. *Brussels*. On the 6th of the month one of them bombarded the open port of Seaham, in Durham. Another had done as much to Whitehaven, in Cumberland, not long before. In the North Sea the fishing fleets were attacked, and several vessels destroyed. The skipper of one of them, the *Butc*, of Hull, was for some hours a prisoner, and found the German officer by no means pleased with the barbarous work he had to do. This reluctant "pirate" was quite friendly, and gave the skipper, if not a lock of his hair, at least a button of his coat, as a memento. During the week ending July 29, eight vessels—British, French, Italian, and Greek—were sent down in the Mediterranean. They amounted in all to over 32,000 tons.

This may be taken as a typical good

¹ A German objection was made by the Admiralty Government, which argued that a vessel which has no opportunity ought not to be considered a legitimate merchant vessel, and that she should be excluded from a neutral port. But this objection was not sustained, and the vessel was accepted as a legitimate merchant vessel.

week for the submarine, and must stand as an example. As until the beginning of February, 1917, the British Government allowed the successive losses and the names of vessels to be published, it would be a merely mechanical task to make a long list of similar cases. But the labour would only produce a bald catalogue, which in itself is neither instructive nor interesting. As much may be said of the loss of the boarding steamer *Duke of Albany* (Commander George N. Ramage, R.N.R.), which was torpedoed on August 24 of the same year. She was an ex-merchant-ship of 1997 tons, armed and commissioned to search all vessels met passing through the North Sea. We must be content to confine ourselves to the general results and main lines.

The spirit grew more bitter month by month. In September, 1916, the Germans began to assert that the British Admiralty had armed all merchant-ships, and had instructed them to fire on submarines at sight. In other words, it was maintained that they were fitted and authorized to serve as war-ships. The deduction which was obviously meant to be drawn, and to be acted on, was that merchant ships could henceforth be lawfully treated as men-of-war, i.e. assailed without previous summons to surrender. The German assertion was emphatically contradicted by the British Admiralty. It was, however, repeated and adhered to. It went with the corresponding accusation that British hospital ships were used as transports for troops and stores. This dishonouring charge was also officially

denied.¹ But it also was maintained and made an excuse.

Whether the sinkings of the S.S. *Britannic* and *Braemar*—both hospital ships, the first in the Zea Channel, the second in the Mykoni Passage (both of them in the *Ægean*)—were in each case due to torpedo or mine was disputed. The *Braemar* carried 400 sick and wounded. Whatever doubt there may be in these cases, it is an undeniable fact that hospital ships were deliberately assailed later on. Towards merchant ships the Germans grew ever more ruthless. On November 6, 1916, the S.S. *Arabia* (P. & O.), of 7935 tons, which carried 437 passengers, was torpedoed in the Mediterranean, 300 miles west of Malta. On December 4 another large steamer, the *Caledonia*, was sunk in the same sea. In this case there was a probability that her captain, James Blaikie, would be put to death as Captain Fryatt had been. The threat of the British Government to retaliate by reprisals produced the desired effect.

The torpedoing of the French war-ship *Suffren*, which left Gibraltar for London on November 24, 1916; of H.B.M. *Cornwallis* on January 9, 1917, in the Mediterranean; the German attack on Funchal, in Madeira, on December 3, 1916, in which the French gun-boat *Surprise* was lost with 34 men, and the S.S. *Dacia* sent down; and the destruction of the Italian war-ship *Reina Margherita*, with the loss of 675 lives, on Decem-

¹ For full details of the controversy see "Miscellaneous, No. 46" (1917) White Paper Cd. 8092. "Correspondence with the German Government regarding alleged misuse of British Hospital Ships". November, 1917.

ber 11 of the same year; even the summary destruction of transports conveying troops, as in the cases of the British *Ivernia* on January 1, 1917, and the French *Magellan*, which was carrying 1000 soldiers, were legitimate operations of war. But such instances of the abuse of force as were quoted in an announcement made by the Secretary of the Admiralty on January 4, 1917, admit of no excuse. After referring to the case of the Furness Withy liner, *Rappahannock*, sunk with all hands, and of the vindictive shelling of the survivors of the S.S. *Westminster*, the Secretary went on to give a final and typical example of the horrors of the submarine warfare:—

“A further case of this callous regard (? disregard) for the lives of noncombatant seamen has now come to light. The British steamship *North Wales*, proceeding in ballast from Hull to Canada, was reported by the German Wireless Press on November 9 as having been torpedoed. Beyond one piece of varnished wood marked ‘*North Wales*’, found in Lennen Cave, and bodies washed ashore on the Cornish coast, nothing further has been heard of her, and it is presumed that the crew took to their boats in the gale raging at the time, and were drowned.”

The soberly-worded official record is more impressive than any flow of picturesque words.

After January, 1917, the German Government acted on the prophecy of Captain Persius. It began unmeasured submarine warfare. By then the boats were ready, and by then (what was no unimportant consideration) it could count on being relieved of the pressure of Russia. Individual cases were

now, so to speak, lost sight of in the storm. The mere list of figures contained in the White Paper issued by the Government on March 21, 1918 (Cd 9009, “Merchant Tonnage and the Submarine”), are the most eloquent record of this aspect of the war at sea during 1917. It is enough to put “lost” and “built” one after the other.

MERCHANT SHIPS (BRITISH AND FOREIGN) LOST IN ALL WAYS IN “GROSS”.

1917.	United Kingdom.	Foreign.	Total for World.
1st Quarter	911,840	707,533	1,619,373
2nd „	1,361,870	875,064	2,236,934
3rd „	952,938	541,535	1,494,473
4th „	782,889	180,054	1,272,843

SHIPS BUILT (EXCLUDING ENEMY COUNTRIES)

	United Kingdom.	Foreign.	Total for World.
1st Quarter	246,239	282,200	528,439
2nd „	240,331	377,100	626,440
3rd „	248,283	368,170	616,453
4th „	419,621	512,402	932,023

During this year, therefore, 4,009,537 tons of British shipping were lost, and the amount built to replace the deficiency was 1,165,474. To appreciate the character of the German submarine war, we have to bear in mind that a large part of the foreign loss belonged to neutrals. The Norwegians alone had lost, up to March 24, 1917, 392 vessels, of which 80 were sailing ships, of 558,500 tons in all. With these facts and figures in our minds, we can more fully appreciate the truth of the words so well spoken by Mr. Balfour at Montreal on May 31, 1917:—

"May I add this about my friend, Admiral de Chair? It is, perhaps, not known to many of you here that he was the admiral, during the long early months of this war, who was in command of the cruiser squadron which practically carried out, single-handed, the blockade of Germany. Night and day, through summer and winter, in the stormiest seas to be found anywhere

were more continuous, more important, and more successful than any other branch of His Majesty's naval forces."

Exception might be taken to Mr. Baltour's use of the words "more important". If the Grand Fleet had not kept the German High Sea Fleet confined to the neighbourhood of its



The King's Visit to the Grand Fleet. June 1, 1917: bluejackets marching past His Majesty on board one of the battleships.

on the face of the globe, that squadron under his command carried out, untiring, unchecked, and with unqualified success, the great task with which they were entrusted. . . . While we remember and know these things, there are two great branches of naval activity on which perhaps our ordinary thoughts are least occupied, one is the unflinching service rendered by our merchant marine in the face of dangers never contemplated in former times as incident to the life of a sailor, and not less than this is the work of that cruiser squadron to which I have referred, whose labours

shore defences, the cruiser squadrons would have had but few opportunities of rendering service. This tying down of the enemy's battle squadrons was the most important service rendered, for it alone allowed the others to be rendered. But the blockade of the German fleet was a major operation, and is mentioned only that it may not be supposed to be overlooked.¹

¹As the sea centers which the British navy engaged in the early years of the Great Fleet were primarily concerned with the High Sea, they are concerned with in this chapter.

There is another branch of the Navy which played a great and growing part in all the operations of the war during 1917—the Royal Naval Air Service. Peculiar difficulties have to be overcome, or even avoided as insuperable, when we make an attempt to do this service justice. The airship is but a recent product of science and mechanical skill. Therefore it is to a far greater extent than the ship which works on the sea (though perhaps not than the submarine) subject to constant, we may almost venture to say daily, change and development. The use made of it in the World War is a novelty for which there is no precedent. Then again secrecy was essential to its successful employment.

While the struggle lasted it would have been foolish in the extreme to reveal more than the general outlines of its constitution and its activity, and we have to note in connection with the subject of this chapter that the Naval Air Service did much more than carry on, and help in carrying on, minor naval operations. It could act as the ally of the army, not more effectually, but more directly, than either the surface or the submarine craft which move on and in the water. During the campaigns of 1917 the Royal Naval Air Service had a share in whatever was being done on the Western Front, or indeed wherever British troops and our Allies were engaged. The military Commanders-in-Chief were emphatic in recording the importance of the aid it gave them. And the service which did so much may almost be said to have been itself a product of the war. It was indeed

in existence in the summer of 1914, but the Report of the War Cabinet for 1917 records the fact that it was then but in its infancy:—

“The Royal Naval Air Service at the outbreak of the war possessed a personnel of under 800; at the present moment [i.e. at the close of 1917] the numbers approach 46,000, and are continually increasing. Their *matériel* after the outbreak of war consisted of 7 non-rigid airships, considerably less than 100 efficient seaplanes and aeroplanes, and no kite balloons. At the present time there are some 176 airships and kite balloons, well over 2500 seaplanes and aeroplanes, and a great number of motor boats and subsidiary appliances of all kinds.”

Subject to all needful qualifications Mr. Balfour's insistence on the value of the services of the cruiser squadrons was fully justified. On them fell the burden of a far-ranging task. They had to keep down the enterprises of the submarines, and to watch for enemies on the surface who were to be expected to strike at the trade, as well as the communications of the army in France. The growth of commerce-destroying by submarines made it incumbent on the Allied Governments to revert to the use of convoy. There are great drawbacks to the use of this method of carrying on trade in war. A minor one is the increased risk of collision. When a number of vessels are moving together at their best average speed, in the dark or in thick weather, without being free to show lights because they must do nothing to attract the notice of an enemy, the danger that they will come into collision must be constantly present. And such misfortunes

occurred. One of the major drawbacks is that convoy entails delay. The vessel which is loaded must wait for the unloaded till it has received its cargo. If they are to keep together they must go at the rate of the slowest among them. A vessel which is bound to go in convoy may be able to make only six voyages in the time in which she could make eight if she were going by herself. And in practice this means a loss of the use of tonnage. Then again, when a convoy is attacked by a locally superior force it can be destroyed at a blow. When the vessels are collected in a neutral port there is bound to be a chance that the enemy's spies will obtain and transmit information. This peril of the system was painfully illustrated by two incidents which took place on October 17 and December 12, 1917—the destruction of the Scandinavian convoys.

The affair of October 17 took place between the Shetland Islands and the Norwegian coast. Two British destroyers, the *Mary Rose* (Lieutenant-Commander C. L. Fox) and H.M.S. *Strongbow* (Lieutenant-Commander E. Brooke) were guarding a convoy of twelve Scandinavian merchant-ships on their way to Great Britain when they were attacked by two heavily-armed German cruisers. The odds were too long to permit of any hope of beating off the attack, but the British officers fought to the utmost to cover their charge. Both the *Mary Rose* and the *Strongbow* were sunk in a very short time by the overpowering armament of their assailants, the first with the loss of 88 officers, and the second with the loss

of 47. Three of the merchant-ships had time to get away, but nine were sunk by the Germans most deliberately, and with a total disregard of humanity.

On January 14, 1918, Sir Eric Geddes, who, in the meantime, had succeeded Sir Edward Carson as First Lord of the Admiralty, gave the House of Commons the finding of a Court of Enquiry composed of Admiral Sir Doveton Sturdee, Vice-Admiral Sir John M. de Robeck, and Rear-Admiral W. E. Goodenough, which was held on the affair of December 12. It exonerated the officers concerned, who had done all they could to protect their charge. The convoy consisted of one British and five neutral steamers (Scandinavians), of 8000 tons in all, on its way to Great Britain, and was under the protection of two destroyers, the *Partridge* and the *Pellew*, and four armed trawlers. The attack was made by a very superior force of German light cruisers. The trawlers could make no resistance. But the destroyers could do what ships on convoy duty have at all times done—namely, make a fight, not in the hope of defeating the assailant but of delaying him and so giving the vessels under their protection time to escape. And this duty was gallantly performed. The *Partridge* was fought till she sank and the *Pellew* badly damaged. The sacrifice of the fighting ships did not avail to save all the convoy, but it was not useless.

At the same time, but in another spot, off the north-east coast of England, two neutral vessels which had dropped out of a convoy (an incident

which is always liable to occur) were destroyed. And these checks were inflicted in spite of the good dispositions made by Sir David Beatty, who was now in command of the Grand Fleet, for the support and covering of the convoys. Many passages of this kind could be quoted from the history of naval warfare in all ages. Nevertheless, it remains true that the use of convoy, with all its drawbacks, did restrict the amount of loss suffered by our trade. It helped to explain why the sinkings effected by the enemy were less by about 120,000 tons in the last quarter of 1917 than they had been in the first. With convoy, trade is hampered; without it, there might be no trade left to protect.

Throughout all the twenty months covered by this chapter the raids of German light craft of one class or another went on. And so long as they possessed safe harbours from which to start, and to which to return, the raiders could not be effectually stopped. They were hard to detect, for they came by night from points within but a short distance of the British coasts. Even by daylight the visibility on the hazy North Sea is limited to two or three miles on more than half the year. The Germans had two most convenient starting-places, their main head-quarters in the Heligoland Bight, and the two advanced posts which their army had secured for them at Zeebrugge and Ostend. Raiders and submarine cruisers, which aimed at far-ranging movements, would start from the first. The *Möwe*, which escaped to the North Atlantic and succeeded in send-

ing down 110,000 tons of British shipping at the end of 1916 and beginning of 1917, got out by the north. Her captain (Dohna Schlodien) repeated his former achievements with remarkable success. It is rather to be wondered at, and is a proof of the vigilance of the watch kept by our cruisers, that more German raiders did not get out by favour of the mists and fogs, the storms and the long nights of the northern seas.

The *Möwe's* cruises were rare successes in a story of general German failure. The rapid raids, which shot out and fled back, were naturally far more numerous. Without professing to mention every brief appearance of a single small German craft, or of a couple or so of them, which fired a few shots at some unfortified seaport or into a field, as in the already-mentioned case of Seaham, we can make a list of these rather sorry triumphs. On October 26, 1916, ten German destroyers, starting no doubt from Zeebrugge or Ostend, made a dash at the Channel. They had the good luck to drop on an inferior British force of two destroyers which had no adequate support at hand. One, the *Flirt* (Lieutenant-Commander P. Kellett), was sunk; another, the *Nubian* (Commander Montague Bernard), was damaged and sank later. The raid was carried as far as Folkestone, and one empty transport, on her way home, the *Queen*, was sent to the bottom. Mr. Balfour pointed out in the House of Commons that if the raid was designed to interrupt the communications with France it had failed. And yet the fact that the

The Great World War

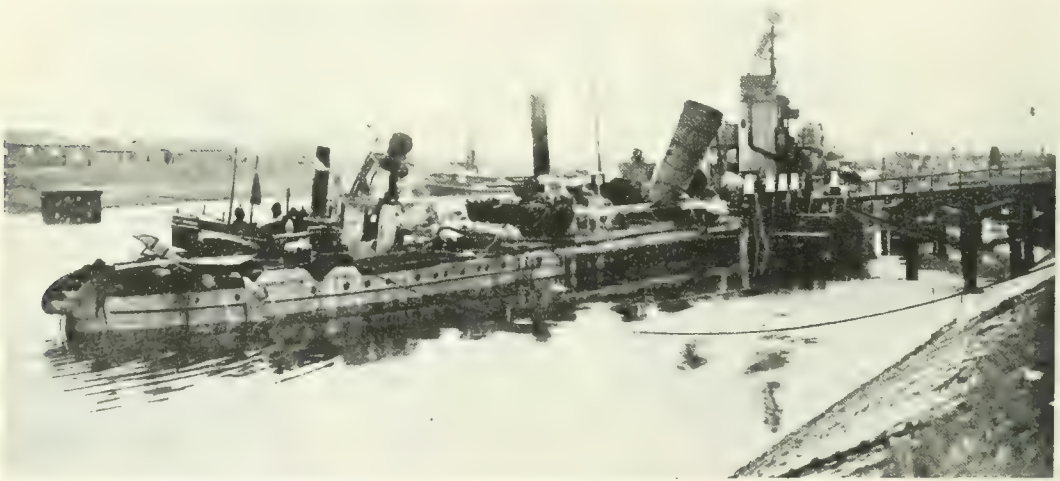
German raiders had reached even the measure of success they did was a tolerably clear proof that the utmost vigilance would be required to make it sure that they would not do far more.

In the night of November 23-24, 1916, two German raids were made—on the mouth of the Thames, when the armed trawler *Narval* was sunk,

other hand, one British destroyer was torpedoed. The V69 got away from Ymuiden before she became liable to be interned. On February 26, 1917, came another raid by night on the coast of Kent, when Margate and Broadstairs were shelled.

And then came a venture which had a very different end.

At about 12.30 a.m. on April 21,



After a Raid on the British Coast, the battered German destroyer V69 lying in Ymuiden Harbour

and on the coast of Norfolk. On January 22, 1917, what was doubtless meant to be another raid, if it were not a casual rencounter of look-out vessels of both main fleets, was spoilt by British destroyers. The roughness of the weather and the shortness of the daylight made decisive action impossible. But the Germans were roughly handled, and one of their destroyers, V69, was so damaged that she had to take refuge in Ymuiden, much battered. Captain Schultz, who was in command, and whose pennant was in the V69, was killed. On the

1917, the east coast of Kent was aroused, not by any means for the first time, by the sound of gun-fire, and by search-lights from the sea. It was another German raid undertaken in the usual way—on a dark, quiet night. To come suddenly, to fire as many shots as can be let off in a few minutes, to do as much damage as you can, when you are not perfectly sure either where you are or what you are aiming at, and then to run before you are interrupted—that is to make a raid. Such operations are not meant to lead to fighting, but to

do damage, and in any case to alarm, and keep up a feeling of insecurity. On this occasion both Dover and Calais were shelled, with some loss of civilian life in the latter. The experience was familiar to the east coast, but now there was a difference in the end. After the customary shelling, sounds and sights out at sea proved that something new was going on.

This time the Germans did not have the water all to themselves for the short interval they required for their enterprise against the shore. As they were turning back, heading eastward, they were met. The raiding force consisted of six vessels, and, by their course, they were on their way home in line ahead, one following the other. They were going at a high speed when they were sighted by



Mr. Middleton-Gyles, R.N.R., decorated for bravery in the destroyer action on April 21, 1917.



Commander F. R. G. Evans, R.N., C.B., D.S.O., commanding the destroyer action on April 21, 1917.

two British destroyers, the *Swift* (Commander Ambrose M. Peck) and the *Broke* (Commander R. G. R. Evans, C.B.), which were heading in a westerly direction. They, also, were in line ahead, the *Swift* leading and the *Broke* following. It must be understood that these two destroyers were the leaders, or, so to speak, pilot ships of the British destroyer guard in the straits. To have left a couple of isolated boats exposed to the attack of perhaps half a score of German raiders would have been an act of unpardonable incompetence on the part of the directing authorities.

The Germans were, of course, not ignorant of the existence of the British destroyer flotilla on the station, and their knowledge that it could not be very far off explains their conduct

When the enemy was sighted by the *Swift* and *Broke*, at 12.40 a.m., he was some 600 yards off, and was going at a great speed. As these German boats are very rapid, nothing could be more certain than that, unless hold was taken of them at once, they would be out of sight, leading ahead in the dark, in three minutes. There was only one way in which hold could be taken—by dashing instantly on them with the intention of producing, or, at any rate, with a perfect readiness to incur, a collision.

The *Swift* turned and dashed at the German line, which had opened fire so soon as the British destroyers became visible. Captain Peck did not ram any of the Germans, but he passed between two of them, then turned so as to take the course they were following, and used his torpedo with such excellent effect as to send one of them down. The *Broke* ran into the third vessel in the German line of six, cutting her open, and reducing her to a sinking state. Captain Evans backed the *Broke* away from the rammed German. By keeping her bows in the wound he would only have delayed the moment when the blow he had delivered would take full effect. But so rapid are the movements of modern warships, that, even during the very brief space of actual contact between the *Broke* and her enemy, the third, fourth, and fifth destroyers in the German line of six had time to pass and to fire into the British vessel as they went by. While the two were locked, the crew of the German destroyer attempted to board the *Broke* over the bow. Mr. Mid-

shipman Donald A. Gyles, R.N.R., who was stationed on the *Broke's* fore-castle, and the crew of the fore-castle, beat them back.

While the *Broke* was ramming and getting clear of the German, the *Swift* had pursued on the same course as the enemy, but injuries which she had received in the first movement of the action compelled her to drop behind, and she turned back to join the *Broke*. The four German destroyers which had escaped ram and torpedo fled away in the dark. The British supporting forces were not on the spot in time to join in the action or overtake the enemy. Their share in inflicting this check on German raiders was moral, but it was real. The fear that the *Swift* and *Broke* would be soon reinforced prevented the six German boats from joining to overpower them. The raiders were, as the course they were following alone shows, already in flight when they were assailed. The promptitude of Captain Peck's attack, and the vigour of Captain Evans's support, made it possible for the two British destroyers to punish them heavily before they got away.

The German boats were new and good, the Q 85 and Q 42, though the enemy's official version tried to belittle the loss. We had the good fortune (so the navy put it) to rescue 10 officers and 108 men. It is a striking proof of the rapidity with which naval war now moves that these movements were all made and this destruction was effected in about five minutes.

CHAPTER VIII

THE MORONVILLIERS BATTLE

(April-May, 1917)

Objects of the Moronvilliers Assault—Description of the German Position—French Preparations for the Attack, and Disposition of the Forces—The Assault and the Check on the Left—Lobit's Division and Mont Cornillet—Naulin's Division and Mont Haut—The Struggle for Le Casque and Mont Téton—Work on the Right Wing—Auberive taken—Second Stage of the Operations—The Mont Cornillet Tunnel—Summary of the Results.

WHILE the great attack on the Aisne heights in April, 1917, was directed by General Nivelle at the ridge of the Chemin-des-Dames, a contemporaneous assault was taking place by his orders, but under the supervision of General Pétain, from the eastern side of Rheims. The attack on the Chemin-des-Dames, with its prolongation in the direction of Berry-au-Bac, was an offensive movement which, if completely successful, would have opened the way to the plains of Champagne and have threatened to turn the German position by way of Laon. The assault on the Moronvilliers heights was one which, had it succeeded to the level of the highest hopes, would have contributed so far to the value of the major attack that the German line in front of Laon could not have withstood the double pressure brought to bear on it, and must have cracked or have been withdrawn.

But, apart from the expectations formed of a successful outcome of the Moronvilliers operations, there was another side to them. The heights are east of those of Nogent l'Abbesse,

from which the Germans bombarded Rheims, and with them formed a strong point from which a German attack, if and when it was projected, could be launched with great effectiveness. A French success here, even if falling short of completeness, was a necessary and valuable defensive measure. Consequently, though the Moronvilliers battle was a part of General Nivelle's campaign of 1917, and deflected German forces to its theatre, even as, farther west, the continued operations about Arras did, the action is best considered separately. Its distinctiveness is that the scheme for it was devised principally by General Pétain, and was carried out by General Anthoine under his eye.

The German position which General Anthoine's army assaulted on April 17, 1917, the day following the opening of the Chemin-des-Dames attack, was one of great natural strength. It lay for the main part west of the River Suippe and the road between Thuizy and Nauroy, and consisted of a group of seven hills, tunnelled, entrenched, wired, and fortified with every resource of the

military science of defence as understood by the Germans. The group of hills, which is a pendant to the Nogent l'Abbesse group 7 miles nearer Rheims, descends on its eastern slopes almost to the Suippe. The most southerly height is the Mont Sans Nom, about 700 feet high, and detached from the others, which form a kind of double ridge pointing north-west, and separated from the southerly outlying height by a wide hollow. The heights of the ridge, dividing themselves into a pair of three's, are, reading west to east, Mont Cornillet, Mont Blond, Mont Haut (the loftiest point), and Monts Perthois, Le Casque, and Le Téton.

When the Germans sustained the first great French attack in the plain of Champagne in 1915 their positions were protected by two interconnected lines of trenches. The Moronvilliers position in 1917 was guarded with from three to five lines with great ramifications of communication-trenches and dug-outs, with tunnels and branch tunnels driven into the slopes of Mont Cornillet and Mont Perthois, each capable of sheltering machine-gunners and supporting troops to the number of one or two battalions. The French line faced this stronghold along a front of 10 miles, and the first-line trenches of the opponents were at several points quite close together. But taking Mont Haut as the highest point to be reached, the French trenches were on an average 400 feet below it, and the storming troops of General Anthoine's army would have to attack uphill for 2 miles. The attack at all parts would

be frontal. Moreover, the natural disposition of the successive heights of the ridge was such that troops advancing south to north on Mont Blond and Mont Haut would be enfiladed from Mont Cornillet and Mont Perthois. Similarly, troops advancing on Le Casque and Le Téton would be enfiladed from Mont Sans Nom on the one side and from Mont Perthois on the other.

The Germans had taken the most minute engineering precautions against having the position turned from either the west or the east. On the west a network of entrenchments covered both sides of the Thuizy-Nauroy road, and the Bois-de-Grille on this side seemed an obstacle of the highest difficulty, as indeed it was to prove. On the east there was a similar network



General Anthoine, commanding the French troops at the Battle of Moronvilliers.
(From a photograph by Mely, Paris.)



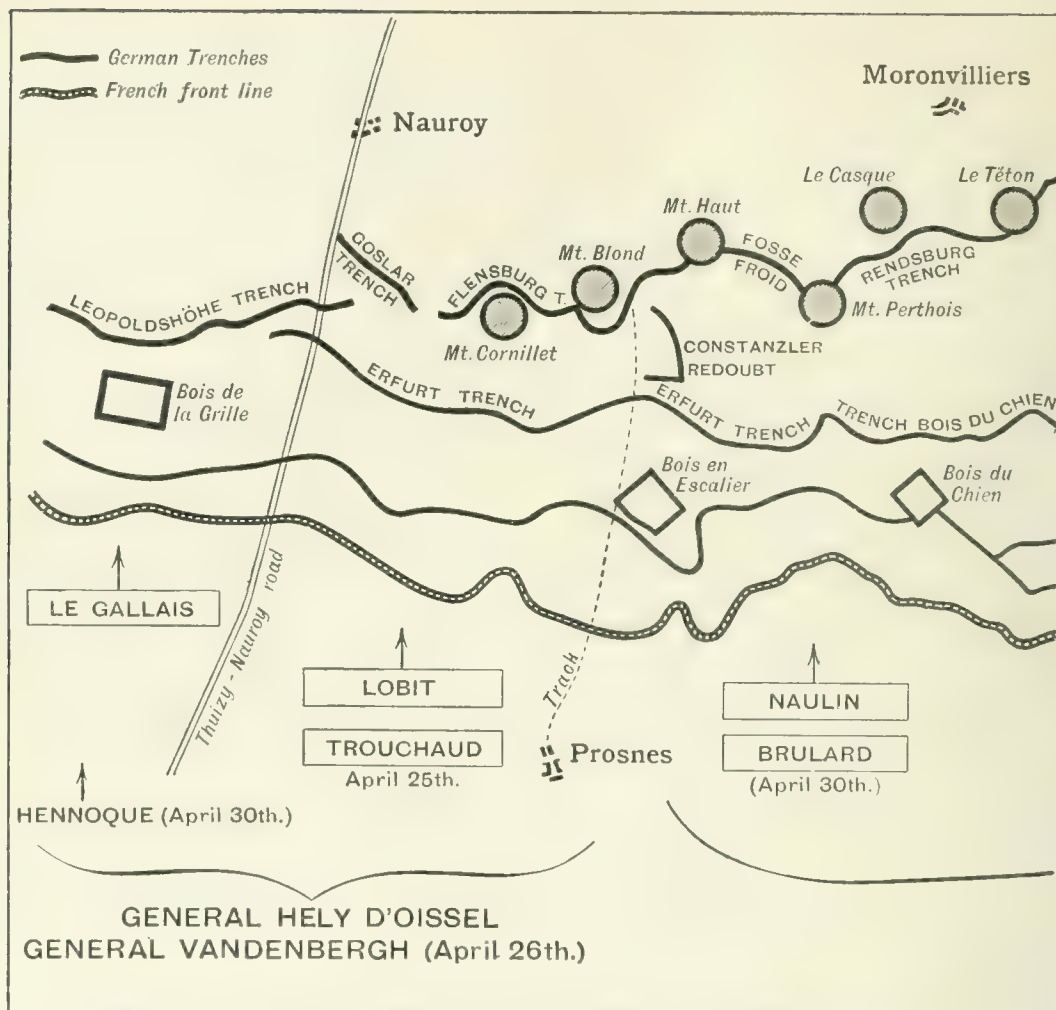
General Hély d'Oissel, commanding the French Left Wing in the Battle of Moronvilliers

of fortification on each side of the River Suippe; north-to-south trenches had been cut along the slopes leading from the heights to the Suippe and supported and intersected the east-to-west frontal trenches. The way up the Suippe was similarly barred by entrenchments and by the labyrinths about Auberive-sur-Suippe and the fortified villages of Vaudesincourt and Dontrien. In the accompanying diagrammatic map of the positions of the Battle of Moronvilliers only the chief trenches and lines of defence are indicated. The actual system was very much more complex, and it would be hard on any plan to exaggerate the difficulties which the assaulting forces had to surmount.

The first line of defences was constructed with the thoroughness and industry which two years' experience

had enabled the Germans to apply to them. The chief features of the second line, higher up the ridge, were the Leopoldshöhe Trench from north of the Bois de la Grille to the Thuizy-Nauroy road; the Erfurt Trench, as the continuation of this line was called, below Mont Cornillet, Mont Blond, Mont Haut, Mont Perthois; the Trench du Bois de Chien, the Landtag and Landsturm Trenches, as its farther continuations south and east of the Mont Sans Nom were named. When this second line was surmounted the assaulters would still have to deal with the fortified hill-tops and their tunnels and backward approaches. The Germans, who had not been disposed at first to believe that the French would risk an attack on this extraordinarily difficult position, became awake in the second week of April to the fact that such an audacity was contemplated, and brought up their defending forces to something over 40,000 men, with a similar number in reserve, and reinforced their artillery to some 220 batteries, or about 1000 guns of all calibres.

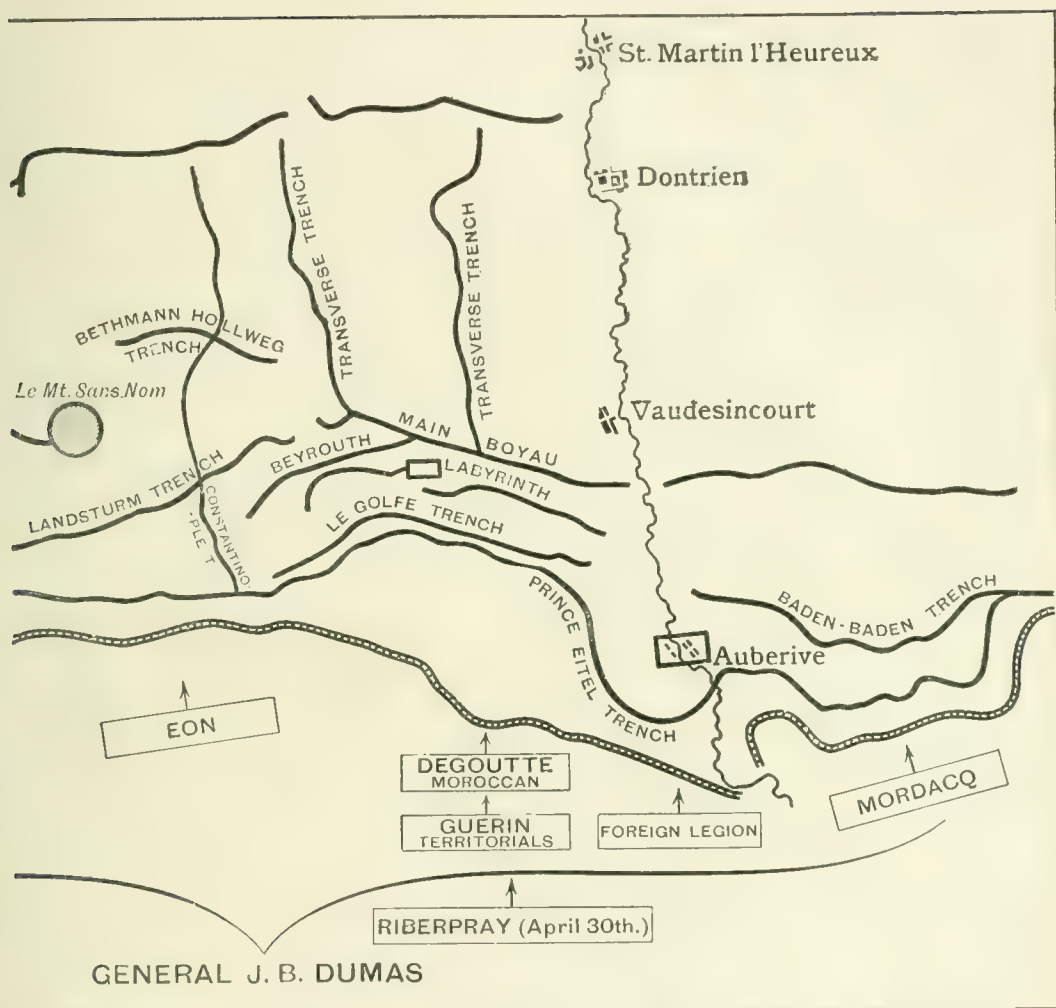
General Anthoine, who commanded the Fourth French Army, to which the assault was entrusted, had under him General Hély d'Oissel, who commanded the left wing (two divisions and a regiment), and General J. B. Dumas, commanding the right wing of three divisions and some additional troops. The numbers were not great; they were supported by a great weight of artillery in which General Anthoine, an old artilleryman, had, like General Pétain, a profound belief. A bombardment from this artillery began on



Diagrammatic Representation of the Battle of Moronvilliers, April 17-May 20, 1917—continued on the opposite page

April 10, 1917, and continued for six days, or, more precisely, till the dawn of April 17, in a ceaseless downpour of high-explosive on every German trench, road, bivouac, dump, or battery which could be reached. This searching fire reduced the German front line to scrap-heaps. The second line, half-way up the slopes, had been wrecked from the trench (Bois du Chien) south of Mont Perthois to

the banks of the River Suippe. But the chief damage had been done on the easterly side of the German position. Towards the west the artillery had not completely done its work, and this defect, especially in La Grille Wood, and in the Leopoldshöhe Trench behind it, proved eventually a very serious handicap to the French advance. The works south of Mont Haut and its neighbours, Mont Cor-



Diagrammatic Representation of the Battle of Moronvilliers, April 17-May 20, 1917; continued from the opposite page

nillet and Mont Blond, had also survived the bombardment, and the hill tunnels were intact. The Constanzer redoubt and trenches guarding Mont Perthois from the west were as formidable as before. Consequently, any turning movement on the part of the French from the west was still greatly prejudiced, and though towards the east the systems of defences about Auberive and Vaudesincourt had been

severely knocked about, they could still offer opportunities for desperate resistance to any turning movement from the east. The relevance of these details to the story of the action depends on the fact that the plan of attack was that of storming the western side of the German defences first. The eastern attack on Auberive was contingent on the success of this movement.

The wing of General Hély d'Oissel was to attack La Grille Wood, Mont Cornillet, and Mont Blond. That of General Dumas was to move on the rest of the position from Mont Haut to the eastern side of the Suippe.

In General d'Oissel's forces, Le Gallais's division was on the extreme left, west of the Thuizy-Nauroy road. Lobit's division was between the road and a track which runs up towards Mont Blond from Prosnes. This division had with it the artillery of another division. Beyond the track to Mont Blond was Naulin's division, intended to move directly on to Mont Haut and Mont Perthois. Next was Eon's division (for Le Casque and Le Téton); and next again the Moroccan division, which, with some Foreign Legion troops and General Guerin's Territorials, covered the ground to the Suippe. East of the Suippe was half of Mordacq's division. The Order in which General Anthoine told the troops that the assault would begin at daylight on April 17 is notable for its reference to the outrages which the Germans had so recently inflicted on the territory they had evacuated, devastating and pillaging Péronne and Roye, levelling the historic keep of Chateau-le-Coucy to the ground, destroying farms and villages and cutting down the very fruit trees of the countryside who for two and a half years had been their enforced hosts. "Each soldier", ran General Anthoine's order, "will remember what France and himself, through his relations and friends and comrades, have suffered from the barbarous enemy."

The advance began in darkness and

in torrents of rain. It had immediate successes; it had one significant check. This was on the extreme left, where the division commanded by Le Gallais, which had done so magnificently at Verdun, found that the artillery preparations had not been drastic enough. La Grille Wood, which the division was to take, was on a slight incline, and therefore offered no dead ground for the advance; the trees were splintered but not levelled; the redoubt in the wood, and the strong Leopoldshohe trench behind it, still sheltered numbers of resisting Germans and machine-guns. Part of Le Gallais's splendid division, in spite of the difficulties, burst through the wood and into the Leopoldshohe trench. But another part was held up and enfiladed by German machine-guns from a trench on the right of the wood. Consequently the successful assaulters, left unsupported on their wing, were unable to hold the Leopoldshohe trench, and were forced back into the wood, though not out of it. Here they held on for three days; but by that time the Germans were as awake to the value of holding the western flank as the French. They brought up reserves, and, though the French could not be dislodged, the attempt to push farther forward was suspended on the 20th.

Lobit's division had had better fortune, and attained a success which was remarkable, seeing that the frustrated advance of Le Gallais had exposed one flank, and an unreduced German work, the Constanzer Redoubt, had prevented co-operation on the other. In two hours the division,

mainly Southerners, had got into all the Erfurt Trench, half-way up the slopes, except on the west, and, after a pause for reconstitution, moved on to Mont Cornillet and Mont Blond. One regiment got to the Cornillet crest, but its companion regiment was stopped by the Germans holding Flens-

The French were driven back from the crest, but they could not be forced from the trenches below it, and they repulsed counter-attack after counter-attack during the evening and the night. Next day (18th) they organized their defences, and on Thursday (19th) put up one of the war's historic



The Trick of the Hun—how the retreating Germans destroyed the trees on the road between Novon and Ross.

burg Trench, which connected Mont Cornillet with Mont Blond.

The position attained by Lobit's men was a delicate one. The commander, grasping the difficulties at once, skilfully brought up batteries to guard the exposed western flank and to fill the gap between the two regiments. It was time. The Germans, appreciating the situation, counter-attacked fiercely and threw in a battalion from their Cornillet tunnel.

defences of ground won. French reserves had to be sent in to repulse the German waves, but by the afternoon Lobit's regiments were still in their places on the slopes. Next night they essayed a farther advance. It was made with great difficulty, and German counter-attacks prevented any development of the advantage. After a further five days' struggle, Lobit's hard tried division was relieved by that of General Trouchaud.

On the right of Lobit's division was that of Naulin, and the success of the first was dependent on that of the second, which was to advance towards Mont Haut, Mont Perthois, and part of Le Casque, taking the Constanzler Redoubt in its stride. Naulin's Zouaves and African troops, in close touch with the divisions on either side, made good progress in the early assault, and got to the Erfurt Trench, but they were held up by the Constanzler Redoubt, the strength of which was sufficient to call for a postponement of the attempt to take it till the heavy guns could be brought to play on it. The position remained untaken on the 17th, though part of Naulin's division were on the outskirts of Mont Perthois Wood. The howitzers did their work early next day, and by eight o'clock in the morning the Constanzler Redoubt was in French hands.

With this point behind them, the division could now advance farther; the heights beyond were furiously shelled, and when dusk was fading a company of Zouaves reached the higher crest of Mont Haut and refused to be ejected by artillery-fire or counter-attack. By the morning (April 19) the French were on both crests of Mont Haut, but could neither get farther nor yet throw the Germans out of the Fosse Froide Trench, which joined the position won to Mont Perthois. Two fresh German divisions had now come up, and the French could not hold the summits against the counter-attacks delivered during the next few days.

General Eon's forces had made

slower progress on the right of Naulin's Africans. He had two regiments with which to reach the heights of Le Casque and Le Téton. These regiments went over the top with the rest of Anthoine's army at daybreak on the 17th, but their task was a heavy one, for they were enfiladed from a wood below Mont Sans Nom, and did not reach the foot of the hills till the evening. They made another attempt next day, but now were enfiladed from the Mont Perthois tunnel, and it was not till the 19th that the fiercest struggle began. In spite of the machine-gun fire from Mont Perthois, one regiment got up to and assaulted the Rendsburg Trench, south of Le Casque, but was held up there. On this regiment's right another, the 11th, recruited from Paris, swarmed on to La Téton and fought there, swaying backwards and forwards under German counter-attacks for the crest. By the night of the 19th the reserve battalion, with only three officers unwounded, held it for the French. Next morning another German counter-attack, assisted by aeroplane-directed artillery, was sent in, and to lessen the pressure the other regiment, held up before the Rendsburg Trench, again attacked Le Casque. The summit was won; it could not be held, but the ground won on Le Téton was secured. The Parisians were relieved next day. Eon's division as a whole held the positions till relieved on May 1. Summing up the results of the more important half of the battlefield, the French by the 20th were clinging to Mont Cornillet, were firmly entrenched on Mont Blond,



FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY

MAULE & FOX LTD

*Lieut. General Sir Stanley Maude, K. C. B.
Commanding in Chief, Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force*

less firmly on the Mont Haut summits, and, though below Le Casque, held Mont Téton.

On the other half of the battle-field General Degoutte, with the Moroccan division, with some Territorials, had been given the task of assaulting Mont Sans Nom and the trenches between it and the Suippe. For the second part of this endeavour they had the assistance of units of Mordacq's division, which was otherwise distributed on the other side of the Suippe. One sector of the attack had a complete and immediate success, for the Zouaves rushed Mont Sans Nom in a quarter of an hour. But to the right of this progress was much slower; the whole day was spent in subduing the Landsturm Trench and its connections, and it was not till two days later that, yard by yard, the Germans had been driven out of the maze and bombed out of the Bethmann-Hollwegg, north-east of Mont Sans Nom.

On the right of this a similar experience had befallen the Foreign Legion, which was part of General Degoutte's right wing. Their progress in successive days was marked by two trenches, or trench systems, they laboriously won. They took the Golfe in their first burst on the 17th; the Byzance fell the next day, as well as the Prinz Eitel, south-west of Auberive. Auberive itself was entered on the 19th by some men of Mordacq's division, who had crossed over from the Suippe. But this day was more momentously marked for the Foreign Legion by the greater task of storming the Beyrout and other

trenches forming the "Labyrinth" and the Main Boyau system. When the Main Boyau had been taken, Vaudesincourt was jeopardized. The Germans had already retreated from Auberive. On the 22nd the redoubt south of Vaudesincourt was stormed. Last of all, and most easterly, Mordacq's division had overcome part of the maze of trenches east of Auberive and the Suippe, but did not get much farther than the Baden-Baden Trench.

At the end of the week's fighting most of the objectives sought by General Anthoine's forces had been attained, but, as they were not quite attained, the hold on them was not secure. It is to be noted that the greater success had been won on the east, and that the German position had not been turned from the west. While that was the case, they retained on Mont Cornillet and the trenches behind it, as well as on the northern slopes and the ravines of Mont Haut, Mont Perthois, and Le Casque, strong bases from which counter-attacks could be launched on positions difficult to consolidate.

It was necessary, therefore, to consolidate and improve the French positions, and fresh divisions were brought up. It was especially necessary to capture the Bois de la Grille and the Leopoldshöhe Trench. On April 26 General Vandenberg took command of General Hély d'Oissel's sector, and fresh divisions were brought up. That of General Hennoque (which had previously followed the retreat of the Germans from the Somme area and had witnessed the scenes of devastation which had been wrought) was

given the task of finishing what Le Gallais's division had begun. They advanced to the assault on April 30, and encountered a resistance as great as if the Moronvilliers battle were opening again. They fought their way from concrete shelter to shell crater,

Till May 4 the struggle went on, but the Mont Cornillet tunnel, always ready to pour out fresh Germans for counter-attack, was too much for the assaulting division, the losses of which were very heavy. The attempt had again to be postponed. Farther east



Among the Ruins of Haut were the Ancient Chateau and part of the Church had been blown up by the retreating German.

and from crater to shelter for eight days. It was not till May 8 that they took the wood's last redoubt and forced the Leopoldshohe Trench. East of this attack, on the opposite side of the Thuizy-Nauroy road, the same bitterness of fighting was experienced by Trouchaud's division in the effort to dominate Mont Cornillet and to seize the Flensburg Trench, without which it could not be held.

the division under General Brulard, which had relieved Naulin's division, made on April 30 a violent assault on Mont Haut, Mont Perthois and its tunnel, and the Fosse Froide behind it. Part of the assault was a costly failure; but compensation was found in the blocking and capture of the Mount Perthois tunnel and part of the Fosse Froide Trench. Still farther east, Eon's division strengthened its

position and repulsed counter-attacks.

On these successes, partial but not unsatisfactory, the fighting closed for more than a fortnight, till steps could be taken on an adequate scale to round off the positions held. Then on May 20, after a bombardment of the fiercest intensity throughout the 19th, portions of three fresh divisions were thrown in against the enemy's lines from Mont Cornillet to Le Téton, the whole range of the Moronvilliers

heights. The chief point aimed at, however, was the summit of Mont Cornillet. It was taken; its tunnel was at last captured, with many asphyxiated Germans in it, and some 600 dead in all. Another 950 men were taken prisoners. In all, the French captured during the action of Moronvilliers, protracted from April 17 to May 20, some 6000 prisoners, 52 guns, and 103 machine-guns.

E. S. G.

CHAPTER IX

BRITISH BATTLES ON THE HINDENBURG LINE

(April-May, 1917)

French and Russian Reasons for continuing the Arras Offensive—AlexiEFF's Message—St. George's Day on the British Front—Capture of Gavrelle and Guémappe—Minor Operations in the Lens Area—Battle of April 28-29, 1917—Canadians capture Arleux-en-Gohelle and Fresnoy—Australia's Hold on the Hindenburg Line below Bullecourt—An Epic Struggle—Fall of Bullecourt—Sir Douglas Haig's Tribute to the "Wallabies"—Loss of Fresnoy—Capture of Rœux—Death of Captain Ball, V.C., D.S.O., M.C.—Air-pilots' Share in the Arras Battles—Close of the Spring Campaign.

HAD the combined battles under General Nivelle succeeded in achieving all that our Allies had hoped from them, Sir Douglas Haig, after preparing the way for that critical offensive by his brilliant victory in the Battle of Arras, would have been free to devote his main energies to the northern operations on the Flanders front, on which his own chief hopes had been based from the beginning of 1917. It has already been explained how the unexpected developments in the early weeks of the year had necessitated the readjustment of the British Com-

mander-in-Chief's plans, in accordance with his instructions from His Majesty's Government to conform to the wishes of the new French Generalissimo. Though Nivelle and Pétain had now driven the Germans back for a considerable distance, it had become clear as daylight to Sir Douglas Haig, at the close of the operations described in our last chapter on the Arras front, "that many months of heavy fighting would be necessary before the enemy's troops could be reduced to a condition which would permit of a more rapid advance".

Yet the urgent need which had im-

pelled General Nivelle to demand this double offensive still existed. The real meaning of the coming collapse in Russia was better realized in France than in this country in the early months of 1917, and General Nivelle had insisted from the beginning in forcing a decisive battle in France before the Germans could venture seriously to weaken their fighting strength on the Russian front. The revolutionary storm had burst several weeks before the Battle of Arras had begun, and profoundly modified the part which Russia had pledged herself to play in the combined offensive for 1917, previously agreed upon by representatives of all the Allied powers. Hopes, however, were still entertained that Russia's military strength might be rebuilt—hopes roused to a deceitful pitch during the summer by General Brussiloff's gallant offensive against the Austrians in Galicia. In any case General Nivelle decided that he must still press for a decision in France at all costs. And in order to assist our French Allies in these plans, Sir Douglas Haig arranged that until their objects had been achieved he would continue his operations at Arras.

"The necessary readjustment of troops, guns, and materials required to complete my preparations for my northern operations," he wrote in his dispatch in the following January, "was accordingly postponed, and preparations were undertaken for a repetition of my attacks on the Arras front until such time as the results of the French offensive should have declared themselves."

Even though the prospects of any

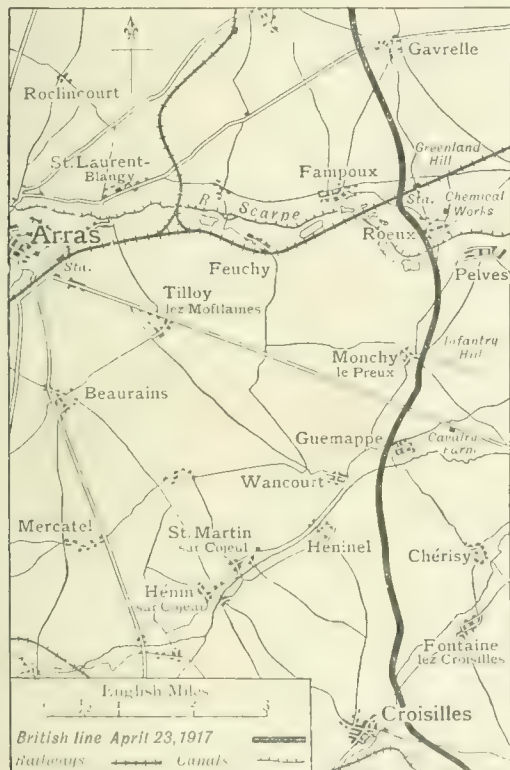
far-reaching success were reduced, as he points out in another part of the same dispatch, it would at least tend to relieve Russia of the pressure on her front while she was trying to reorganize her government. That this chivalrous side of the British offensive was not unappreciated by those of our allies in Russia who were struggling to keep their country true to all her pledges in the war, was seen on April 19, when General Alexieff sent Sir Douglas Haig the congratulations of the Russian armies under his command on the brilliant achievements of British arms at Arras, and his assurances on their behalf "that we await the moment when we can take our share in these successes". Sir Douglas Haig, in reply, wished General Alexieff the best of luck in his forthcoming efforts against the common enemy.

It was the British Commander-in-Chief's turn to strike again just a week after the French had launched their main attack on the Aisne. This was on St. George's Day—the first perfect spring day of a season which hitherto had done its worst to handicap our sorely-tried regiments in the all-important matter of the weather—and many of the English troops went into battle at dawn with red-and-white rosettes on their helmets or tunics, fighting with a nobler courage than ever in honour of their patron saint. With the Scottish troops, who shared with them the chief honours of the day, they needed all the support they could muster in the swaying battle which ensued for the last defences protecting the Hindenburg positions north and south of Vitry-en-Artois.

None of the element of surprise which had helped towards the great successes of the opening phase of the battle on April 9 had been possible on this occasion. The Crown Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria, who commanded the German army group in Artois,

throughout the operations. So vital was this line considered that the troops defending it received imperative orders to hold our attack at all costs. Thus the fighting which followed was as fierce as anything that had been witnessed in all the long years of the war.

The new British battle front was more limited than on April 9, extending only from Croiselles to Gavrelle, a distance of about $8\frac{1}{2}$ miles. Everywhere the German lines were held in great strength, with a seemingly inexhaustible supply of Prince Rupprecht's best reserves in support; so that once the rival armies came to grips the tide of battle ebbed and flowed over the rolling slopes of most of the battered region on both sides of the Scarpe, swaying backwards and forwards from daybreak to sundown, and on through the following night and morning, by which time, however, our limited objectives had practically all been secured. Thousands of lives were sacrificed by the enemy in his efforts to frustrate what he proclaimed to be "another British attempt to break through", in a *communiqué* bristling with falsehoods. Neither on that occasion, nor on April 9, had we attempted to "break through" in the sense conveyed in the German wireless message, as was pointed out on April 24 by our Secretary of State for War:



The British Battle Front on April 23, 1917: approximate positions of the line before the renewed advance

while starting his troops feverishly to work to finish the Drocourt-Quéant switch-line, had brought up immense reinforcements of infantry, and many new batteries, to protect the threatened positions, thus nearly doubling his strength in this theatre within ten days of the opening of the British offensive, notwithstanding the heavy casualties which he had sustained

"Our objective was in each case a limited one. On both occasions we gained all the objectives assigned to the attacking troops. The message states that 'the western suburbs of Lens, Avion, Oppy, Gavrelle, Rœux, and Guémappe were the hottest places in the fierce struggle'. This is obviously intended to give the impression that all these places

were included in our objectives. As a matter of fact, we made no attack whatever on the three first-mentioned places, and all three are at a considerable distance from our line. . . . On this front we were successful in securing Gavrelle and Guémappe, and in establishing ourselves in the western outskirts of Rœux. These villages alone formed our objectives. . . . It is true that the fight swayed backwards and forwards, but the final result was that all the captured positions remained in our hands, and that the enemy's repeated counter-attacks were repulsed with very heavy losses, while our own casualties were moderate."

It was always a sign of success when the German High Command strove to deceive the world with wholesale falsehoods of this description, but it was not often possible, or at least advisable, to give them the lie direct as on this occasion, since the chief object of the operations was constantly to threaten the enemy with an apparent extension of our front of attack. The drawback to this was that Sir Douglas Haig, as he points out in his dispatch, frequently found himself unable to deny German accounts of the bloody repulse of extensive British assaults which, in point of fact, never took place.

Gavrelle, to return to the renewed battle on April 23, was carried and held by the Royal Naval Division early in the day—a gain of considerable strategic value, since it pierced the strong German line running northwards through Oppy. By 10 a.m. English county troops had reached the buildings west of Rœux Station, and gained the line of their objectives on the western slopes of Greenland Hill, north of the railway. On their right Highland Territorials were faced

with a sterner task on the western outskirts of Rœux Station and the chemical works, while farther south other Scottish troops were already through the fiercely-contested ruins of Guémappe, one of our storm centres on this part of the front, which we had already won and lost twice before. On the Scotsmen's right the high ground west of Cherisy was at the same time carried by the attacking English brigades, but in the desperate series of counter-attacks which followed during the afternoon our troops were compelled to withdraw by sheer weight of numbers. It was this set-back, and the situation on the Scottish left, which forced the captors of Guémappe to leave that death-trap once more in the enemy's hands. Only for a time, however. Orders were issued to renew the advance in the evening, and in this attack Guémappe was once again retaken. This time it was firmly held, but it was not until the following morning that the enemy, after twenty-four hours of the most stubborn resistance, left the English troops at last in undisputed possession of the high ground overlooking Cherisy and Fontaine-les-Croiselles. "Very appreciable progress" had also been made east of Monchy-le-Preux, as well as on the left bank of the Scarpe and on Greenland Hill, but the bitter struggle which had continued for the possession of the chemical works, and the station to the north, had so far produced little change in the situation at Rœux. Gavrelle, meantime, had been gallantly held by the Royal Naval Division against no fewer than eight separate counter-attacks, all of

which were completely crushed by our artillery barrage and machine-gun fire.

Of all the dramatic incidents in this ferocious phase of the battle the most remarkable is that recorded of certain units of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders and the Middlesex Regiments, who, cut off in one of the retirements on the 23rd, and given up for lost, were recovered in our counter-attacks on the following day, after holding out all night against seemingly overwhelming odds. In the first rush these gallant men had won to the farthest point of the advance, where they captured several officers and 14 men; and they not only stayed on when the greater part of the line was forced back, and saved their isolated post against all the efforts of the enemy, but were still holding their prisoners when relieved on the following day, finally marching them home in triumph behind the British lines. On the 25th Mr. Philip Gibbs recorded a similar case relating to a party of Worcesters who, having been cut off in a small copse, lay there for several days, surrounded by the enemy:

"They had their 'iron' rations with them, and lived until those were gone, and they were starving and suffering great agony for lack of water. But still they would not surrender, and last night were rewarded for their endurance by seeing the enemy retire before the advancing waves of English troops."

While these operations were in progress a minor demonstration had been carried out on the 23rd south-west of Lens the sole justification for the

German suggestion that Lens had been one of our main objectives—in the course of which Cornish troops succeeded in establishing themselves on the railway loop east of Cité des Petit Bois, and in maintaining their foothold in spite of numerous counter-attacks. Altogether we had captured on April 23-24 a further 3000 prisoners, as well as a few guns.

"The strength of the opposition encountered in the course of this attack," writes the British Commander-in-Chief, "was in itself evidence that my offensive was fulfilling the part designed for it in the Allied plans. As the result of the fighting which had already taken place twelve German divisions had been withdrawn exhausted from the battle or were in process of relief. A month after the commencement of our offensive the number of German divisions so withdrawn had increased to twenty-three."

Yet the situation on the French front still necessitated further efforts in the Arras region before Sir Douglas Haig would be free to launch his main attack in the north. At all hazards the enemy must be kept in doubt as to whether our offensive on the Arras front would be proceeded with. Four days after the battle of April 23-24 had died down, therefore, another assault was launched on a front of about eight miles north of Monchy-le-Preux. In order to economize his troops for more vital needs Sir Douglas Haig's objectives on this occasion were more limited even than before, demonstrations being continued southwards to the Arras-Cambrai road and northwards to the Souchez River, where

the Canadians once more joined in the fray. The Germans again proclaimed it to all the world as "a third great attempt to break through the German lines", on a front of "nearly nineteen miles", and its alleged defeat as bringing "a new day of honour for our infantry". In his dispatch eight months later Sir Douglas Haig, after pointing out the essentially local nature of the operations, disposes of this claim in the following restrained and accurate statements of fact:—

"The assault was launched at 4.25 a.m. by British and Canadian troops, and resulted in heavy fighting, which continued throughout the greater part of the 28th and 29th April. The enemy delivered counter-attack after counter-attack with the greatest determination and most lavish expenditure of men. Our positions at Gavrelle alone were again attacked seven times with strong forces, and on each occasion the enemy was repulsed with great loss. In spite of the enemy's desperate resistance, the village of Arleux-en-Gohelle was captured by Canadian troops, after bitter hand-to-hand fighting, and English troops made further progress in the neighbourhood of Oppy, on Greenland Hill, and between Monchy-le-Preux and the Scarpe. In addition to these advances, another 1000 German prisoners were taken by us in the course of the two days' fighting."

The capture of Arleux-en-Gohelle, which broke the famous Oppy line above Rœux, added another splendid feather to the Canadians' cap. Like all these unhappy villages on the Arras battle-field, Arleux was defended by a fearful network of wire, as well as nests of machine-guns at every available spot; and in places the wire was

still practically intact, in spite of all our artillery fire. Yet the Canadians stormed the trenches with a dash which swept everything before them, both in the village and the neighbouring wood, so that the whole front on this sector of the line fell into our hands.

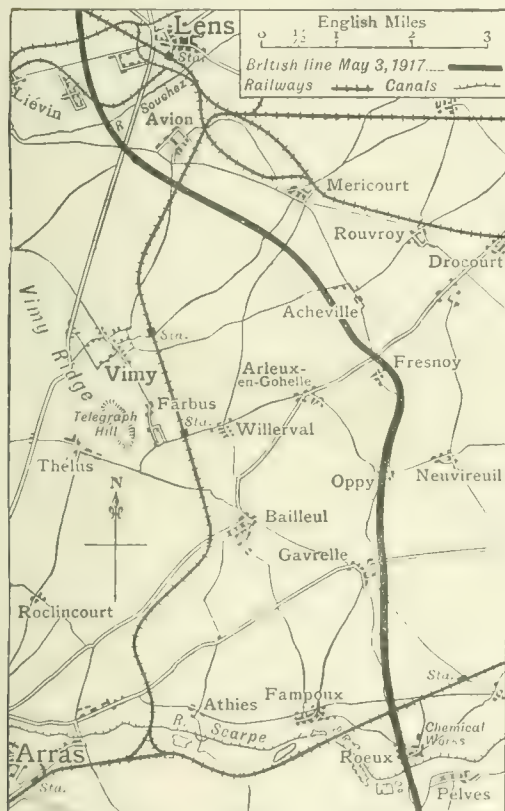
Arleux proved an excellent stepping-stone to Fresnoy—four miles east of the village of Vimy—which was to fall to the Canadians on May 3, in an attack of a similar nature, and for a similar purpose, undertaken by Sir Douglas Haig. On this occasion, in view of the great French assault three days later against the Chemin-des-Dames, the British Commander-in-Chief arranged for a considerable extension of his fighting front. While the Third and First Armies, under Generals Allenby and Horne, attacked from Fontaine-les-Croiselles to Fresnoy, the Fifth Army, under General Gough, launched a second assault upon the Hindenburg Line in the neighbourhood of Bullecourt, thus completing a total front of over sixteen miles.

It was still dark when the battle flared up again in the small hours of May 3, the troops going "over the top" at 3.45 a.m., and breaking into the enemy's positions along practically the whole of the line. The capture of Fresnoy by the Canadians was a particularly brilliant affair. At the time of the assault the village was full of Germans massing for a counter-attack for the recovery of Arleux, of which the Dominion troops had robbed them five days before. A little later and there would have been a repetition of

the Courcellette incident eight months ago on the Somme, when the enemy attacked the Canadians just before the time fixed for their own glorious advance on that village down the infamous slopes which led from the high ridge at Pozières. This time it was the

Fresnoy was temporarily held up by unbroken wire and stubbornly defended machine-guns; but, prepared for such an emergency, the Canadians swept round the flanks of the village and fought their way among the ruins, foot by foot, both from left and right. "After hard fighting, in which the enemy lost heavily," writes Sir Douglas Haig, "the Canadians carried the village, thereby completing an unbroken series of successes." Their captures in this crowning but, alas! fleeting triumph included 200 men and 8 officers. One of these officers was incredulous when informed that Fresnoy had been taken by the same Canadians who had captured the Vimy Ridge on April 9, and then Arleux towards the end of the month. It was impossible, he declared, that such a series of attacks could be carried out by the same troops; but, when finally convinced, was chivalrous enough to congratulate the Canadians on their prowess.

While Fresnoy was thus being fought and won on the extreme left of our battle front, the Australians, on the extreme right, were delivering their second and more memorable attack on the Hindenburg Line just below Bullecourt, with English troops on their left battling for the village itself; while other English troops were seizing Cherisy, entering Rœux, and capturing the German trenches south of Fresnoy. As usually happened, the hardest part of the battle came with the inevitable counter-attacks, the Germans on this occasion throwing in dense masses of men, time after time, with reckless disregard of losses.



The British Battle Front between Lens and Arras after the operations on May 3, 1917

Germans' turn to be forestalled; and they failed to repeat the Canadians' performance at Courcellette, where, it will be remembered, the enemy's attack was so quickly and effectually disposed of that the Dominion troops were ready for their own adventure at the exact moment originally planned. It is true that their frontal attack on

With Sir Douglas Haig still economizing his strength for his real blow elsewhere, and the enemy preparing for what he insisted on being "the fourth English attempt to break through", and bringing up reinforcements which gave him immense superiority in numbers, it was not

Australians, whose exploit will presently be treated separately, maintained their hazardous footing in the Hindenburg Line below Bullecourt; and we also secured our hold upon certain trench elements west of Fontaine-les-Croiselles and south of the Scarpe. Altogether we had also



Official Photograph

Behind the Front Line on the Western Front: a battalion head-quarters

surprising that we failed to hold all these gains in the hammer-and-tongs struggle which developed along the whole battle-line, accompanied by an intense bombardment with heavy guns. Rœux had once more to be given up, as well as Cherisy, in the sanguinary fighting which lasted throughout the afternoon and far into the night. Fresnoy, however, remained for the time being in Canada's hands; the

taken, roughly, another 1000 prisoners, including 29 officers.

In the brief breathing space which followed, while the French were delivering their successful attack on the Chemin-des-Dames, Sir Douglas Haig reviewed the results since the beginning of his offensive on the Arras front as follows:—

"We had captured over 19,500 prisoners, including over 400 officers, and had also

taken 257 guns, including 98 heavy guns, with 464 machine-guns, 227 trench mortars, and immense quantities of other war material. Our line had been advanced to a greatest depth exceeding five miles on a total front of over twenty miles, representing a gain of some sixty square miles of territory. A great improvement had been effected in the general situation of our troops on the front attacked, and the capture of the Vimy Ridge had removed a constant menace to the security of our line.

Thus, though the decisive action which it had been hoped might follow from the French offensive was not to be realized, the magnitude of the results actually achieved on both fronts strengthened the Allies' belief in its ultimate possibility. In this belief Sir Douglas Haig was now free, at last, to concentrate his attention on his northern plan of campaign, to begin a month later with the Battle of Messines. Meantime it only remained to maintain a threatening front on the Arras field in order to contain as many as possible of the enemy divisions there, and to round off the spring campaign by securing the foothold established by the Australians on May 3 in the Hindenburg Line. What had hitherto been necessary for the French effort was now essential to the success of our own major operations in the northern theatres. The southern armies consequently continued their self-sacrificing actions with such forces as were left to them, the required effect being attained by a careful selection of important objectives of a limited nature, deliberate preparation of attack, concentration of artillery, and economy of infantry. A threatening air of importance was given

to these operations by combining them with feint attacks, and by the adoption of many ingenious devices to extend the apparent battle front. The Germans, no less than the arm-chair strategists at home, were kept in a feverish state of expectancy by all these preliminary signs of mighty blows which never materialized on the Arras front.

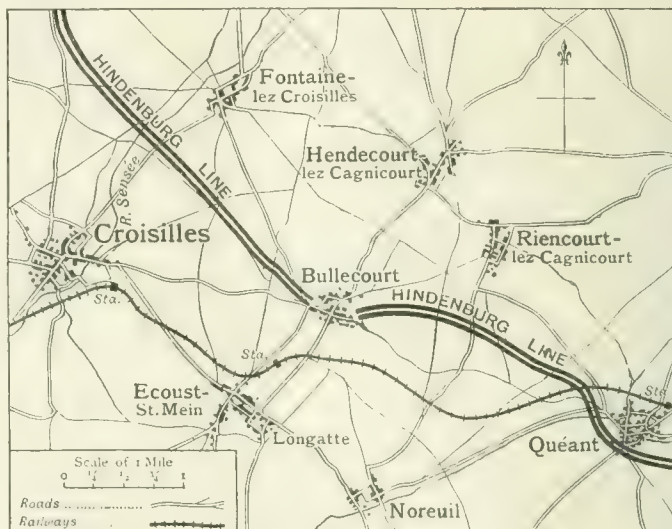
First, it was necessary to capture Bullecourt, in order to consolidate the hold on the Hindenburg Line so stoutly won by the Australians on May 3. The "Wallabies" had been robbed of this prize on April 11, when, as explained on p. 78, their fine attack with the Fifth Army was wasted through the failure of the Third Army to crack the German line on their left. On that occasion many Australians had been cut off and captured by the enemy. Some of these had escaped with tales which made British blood boil, of incredible brutalities which had been inflicted on these prisoners; and their comrades in the new attack were thirsting for revenge. They narrowly escaped a similar set-back, however, to that of April 11, attacking exactly at the point, between the villages of Bullecourt and Riencourt, through which they had previously advanced. This time they had adequate artillery support, and, in the centre, carried all their ground like clockwork, winning through and beyond the second-line trenches of the Hindenburg system in less than half an hour.

"The attack in the centre went from point to point, position to position," wrote Mr. C. F. W. Bean, Official Press Correspondent with the Australian Force, "absolutely in accordance with a written time-

table, in which the slowly creeping line of bursting shrapnel was the minute-hand. The line went on and out from the second Hindenburg trench, slowly over the slope beyond, across a sunken road, into a German tramway cutting towards the village of Riencourt. There were British troops timed to come up with them, working all to the same huge programme. At that moment, though the Australians could not know it, the British who were to have been beside them were scattered in hand-to-hand fighting in the brick ruins of Bullecourt village."

This would not have been so serious if their own troops, on the right of their attack, had not failed, for some inexplicable reason, at the first onset. Thus the victorious troops in the centre were again completely isolated, with both flanks in the air. A great part of the Australian right atoned for its first failure in a desperate effort to rejoin their isolated comrades, and all day scattered units were bombing their way up through the Germans who were counter-attacking on the Australian flank. With Bullecourt still in the enemy's hands, however, it was impossible to hold on to the most advanced position won beyond the German lines; but a final stand was made in the solid section of the Hindenburg Line, to the right of Bullecourt, which constituted practically the exact position that they had been asked to take. Here they remained, for days and nights together, with the

unbroken defences of the Hindenburg Line on their right, and the uncaptured village of Bullecourt on their left, subjected all the time to counter-attacks and rifle and artillery fire not only from these flanks, but also from Quéant and Riencourt, in the dip of the round in front.



Map illustrating the Operations round Bullecourt, and the Sector of the Hindenburg Line to the right of that village, won by the Australians on May 3, 1917, and held after two weeks of constant fighting

The story of Bullecourt, and of the stand of the Australians against incredible odds, forms one of the most heroic chapters in the history of the war. Some of its incidents on the first day are recorded by Mr. Bean as follows:—

"At noon the heads of Germans were seen at various points, and presently on they came, out of the sunken road which our advanced troops had occupied during the earlier hours, diving from shell-hole to shell-hole, two or three hundred of them together, for all the world like a school of seals. It is some new method of attack,

and it was well carried out, but they say that it was irresistibly funny to watch. It was wiped out by our machine-guns and rifles. The men stood breast-high over the parapet, with cigarettes in their mouths, and shot as they have seldom had the chance to shoot. A few brave men got within a dozen yards of them in one part. A bombing attack down the trench was made at the same time. It met with a shower of trench-mortar bombs. One German was seen hoisted bodily out of the trench 30 feet into the air, turning over and over as he spun. The attack melted.

"The German trench mortars kept up at times a most powerful bombardment of the right, and under it the right half of the attack was gradually forced back completely on to the left. A Western Australian unit took up the fight and bombed back along the whole trench to the limit of the objective, and again it was driven back. At 10 o'clock at night the Germans counter-attacked again furiously down the trench. We were holding barely 500 yards of the Hindenburg Line by this time, and there were signs of attack from the left rear as well as the right. At that moment, when things seemed almost past praying for, the word to retire came along part of the line. The men whom it reached flung it back. 'Who said so?' they asked. 'What officer of ours gave that order?' The officers and men there had determined that, if it came to the worst and the Germans closed entirely round them, they would cut their way back through the enemy."

But though counter-attack succeeded counter-attack, and more than once the gallant defenders seemed like being surrounded, the enemy was always flung back in time to prevent this last extremity. Once, when the position seemed desperate, the Australians were heartened by a tribute from a British airman, who, after supporting them in a gallant flight not more than 200 feet

above the enemy's trenches, dropped a message over the Commonwealth lines with the generous tribute: "Bravo, Australia!" To the Australians' grief his machine was brought down behind our lines only a few minutes later. Meantime fighting for the possession of Bullecourt itself, where German machine-gun fire had dominated the situation on May 3, went on unceasingly. Then, on the morning of May 7, English troops won and held a footing in the south-eastern corner of the ruins; but it was not until ten days later, after the Germans had thrown many of their best troops into what had developed into a great bombing and hand-to-hand encounter along the whole of this disputed ground, that the last corner of the village fell into our hands, London and West Riding Territorials completing the conquest. All this time the Australians were holding their ground with the same tenacity as before, beating off sometimes as many as four separate assaults in a day, and steadily improving their position by bombing eastward along the captured line. "The defence of this 1000 yards of double trench line, exposed to counter-attack on every side, through two weeks of almost constant fighting"—in the words of Sir Douglas Haig himself—"deserves to be remembered as a most gallant feat of arms."

Ground was lost as well as gained in the violent struggles along other sections of the Arras front. The most serious set-back was at Fresnoy, which the enemy had determined to recover from the Canadians, no matter at what sacrifice; and for this purpose had brought up the 1st Guards Reserve

and 5th Bavarian Divisions to reinforce the 15th Reserve Division holding the line east of the village after its capture on May 3. Fresnoy had been a dangerous spot from the first. With Acheville to the north, and Oppy to the south, still in German hands, it

foothold in the trenches north-east of the village, the first onset proved a costly failure, all the ground lost being shortly afterwards regained. Then, however, came a second attack east of Fresnoy, where the two fresh German divisions were hurled in massed



With the "Wallabies" in France: Australians parading for the trenches

formed a sharp salient along our front, with exposed sides which the enemy at once marked down for attack, concentrating upon the position every available German gun north of the Scarpe as far as Lens. The counter-attacks on May 8 followed a heavy bombardment with gas shells, but though the infantry advanced in dense columns, and succeeded in gaining a

strength, regardless of cost, on troops who had already suffered the ordeal of a prolonged and intense bombardment. According to Mr. Philip Gibbs it was English troops who had to bear the brunt of this concentrated fury. "The Canadian officers", adds this correspondent, "are full of praise for the dogged spirit of the South Country lads, who held on in spite of a frightful

fire, served their machine-guns to the last, and only fell back from their advanced lines when for a time Fresnoy village, a heap of ruins like all these villages of war, became a death-trap in which no man could stay alive." It had cost the enemy an appalling price to wrest it from us; and since the position no longer played a vital part in the British plans there was no object in paying a similar sum to recover it.

It was sounder strategy to strengthen our line on the old battle-field of Arras than to sacrifice men on unnecessary salients. For this reason it was now decided to clear out the hornets' nest at Rœux, which had changed hands times out of number during a month of bitter warfare, and still enabled the enemy's machine-gunners to rake our troops fighting both north and south of the Scarpe. The approaches to Rœux and its infamous surroundings—the loopholed cemetery; the chemical works, the complicated defences of which were won and lost as many times as the ruins of Mouquet Farm on the Somme; and the labyrinth of tunnel and redoubt—were guarded not only by the defenders themselves, but also by the enemy posted in formidable strength on the south side of the Scarpe, as well as by the marshy nature of the ground, and the protection afforded by the embankment of the Arras-Douai railway. As already recorded, there had been fierce fighting for Rœux on April 12, but it was not until April 23 that Scottish troops—the Highland Territorials of the 51st Division, with the gallant 9th Division on their left—made the first entry into that stubbornly contested village. The failure of other

troops across the river to oust the Germans from Pelves, however, had rendered the Scotsmen's hardly-won position untenable, and, in the face of a murderous fire from all directions, they had been unable to hold the ground thus conquered, and were forced back. What they had done that day in storming a passage clean through the fortified chemical works, and into the ruins of the village itself, was not fully appreciated until the whole scrap-heap was cleared of Germans between May 12 and 14, and all its maze of defences explored.

Our men went in and out of the chemical works, and beyond, both on April 20 and 28; and English troops won and lost the village once more in the early days of May. Then, in the decisive struggle between May 12 and 14, when the heart had been thoroughly hammered out of the defence, the whole of Rœux and its outskirts fell firmly into our hands. English, Scottish, and Irish troops all had a share in this closing triumph, which added some 700 prisoners to our spoils, and removed a long-standing menace to our battered line.

The closing scenes in this local drama were preceded, on the 3rd, by the final storming of the notorious Gavrelle windmill, two miles farther north, which had already changed hands some nine or ten times since the Arras Battle began; and, on the 11th, by the capture of another villainous stronghold, known as Cavalry Farm, which had been the scene of equally prolonged and bitter warfare astride the Arras-Cambrai road, beyond Guémappe. London troops were

responsible for this last success, which added a good 1200 yards of German trench to our line at a vulnerable point.

It was during this desperate series of local battles that Captain Albert Ball, V.C., D.S.O., M.C., the hero of uncounted encounters in the air,



Captain Albert Ball, V.C., D.S.O., M.C., killed in action over the German Lines in the Spring Campaign of 1917 (From a photograph by F. N. Birkett)

fought his last fight over the German lines. He met his end worthily in a glorious battle with four hostile craft, and was buried by the enemy at Annœullin, near Lille. At the time of his death he had probably accounted for more enemy machines than any other flying man among all the Allied armies,¹ and, though still only in his

twenty-first year, had won an international reputation. He had already received a Russian decoration, as well as the D.S.O., with two bars—which meant that he had earned that decoration three times—and the M.C. With the news of his death came the announcement that the French Government had conferred upon him the Cross of Chevalier of the Legion of Honour, shortly to be followed by the crowning honour of the Victoria Cross, with a letter from the King himself, regretting that death had deprived His Majesty "of the pride of personally conferring upon him the greatest of all rewards for valour and devotion to duty". The letter was addressed to the airman's father, Alderman Albert Ball, of Nottingham, who subsequently received his son's decoration from the King at an investiture in London.

In his dispatch dealing with the Arras Battle Sir Douglas Haig accords high praise to the skill, courage, and devotion of the air-pilots throughout the operations. "In the discharge of duties, constantly increasing in number and importance, the Royal Flying Corps," he wrote, "has shown the same magnificent offensive spirit which characterized its work during the Somme Battle, combined with unsurpassed technical knowledge and practical skill." The growing intensity of aerial warfare was revealed in a comparison between the monthly figures of aeroplane losses, Allied and foreign, during the first phase of the Somme Battle of 1916—165 for July, 189 for August, and 322 for September—with the total of 1430 for the months of April and May alone in the Arras Battle of

¹ The exact figure is not known, but it is estimated that he accounted for more enemy machines than any other flying man among all the Allied armies, and, though still only in his

1917. These are the totals arrived at by compiling the figures published at the time in the daily *communiqués* of Germans and Allies alike. The struggle for supremacy in the air continued by night as well as by day, long-distance raiding under the stars, and a definite

Douglas Haig pointed out, maintaining contact with our advancing troops, reporting their positions and signalling the earliest indications of hostile counter-attack, but themselves joining in the advance by engaging the enemy's infantry, both in line and in



Drawn by H. G. DICKSON

Night Flying on the Western Front: British biplane alighting at an aerodrome with the aid of search-lights and petrol flares

aerial offensive behind the enemy's lines, having become a recognized part of the preparations for infantry attack. Every successive assault demonstrated clearly the paramount necessity for the closest co-operation between the forces of the air and land. More and more the low flying craft assumed the rôle of aerial infantry, not only, as Sir

support, with machine-gun fire and bombs; others meantime assisting our artillery to disperse hostile concentrations, and spread confusion among the enemy's transport, reinforcements, and batteries.

The story of the spring campaign of 1917 along the battle-fields of Arras is completed with the record of steady

progress made along the short stretch of the Hindenburg defences lying between Bullecourt and our own front system west of Fontaine-les-Croiselles, English and Scottish battalions sharing the chief infantry honours of attack, while our gunners wiped this fresh limb of the redoubtable line off the war map of France. By June 16 touch had been established between the separated links, thus completing the capture of that part of the Hindenburg Line to the west of Bullecourt. Another link had been seized in one of the neatest affairs in the whole course of these local operations—overlooked at the time in the greater news from the battle-field of Messines. This occurred on June 15, when Scotsmen and troops from the Eastern Counties caught the Germans napping, or rather breakfasting, on Infantry Hill, east of

Monchy. Sweeping down upon the astonished defenders between seven and eight in the morning, without a word of warning from the guns, they not only rounded up 175 prisoners in less than a couple of minutes, but held fast to the enemy's positions, beating off two counter-attacks. For the time being, however, the Arras battle-field assumed only a secondary importance in the British plans, Sir Douglas Haig's main interest, like the bulk of his resources, having now shifted to the north, where Plumer and the Second Army had already fought and won their brilliant victory at Messines, while the Italians, who were not ready when the combined French and British offensive was first launched in April, were making their splendid effort in the Trentino.

F. A. M.



Night Flying in France. French biplane arriving in the rays of several search-lights

CHAPTER X

ITALY'S DOUBLE OFFENSIVE

(May–September, 1917)

Italian Commander and the Strategic Position—Cadorna's Alternatives—The Early Summer Campaign—Capture of Kuk and Vodice—Thrust on the Carso and towards Hermada—Limits of the Offensive—Its Captures and Cost—The Trentino Position and the Attack on Monte Ortigara—Politics in Italy and the Adriatic Problem—Pacifism and the Army—A regrettable Incident in the Hermada Sector—Effect of the Russian Defection on the Italian Prospects—Strength of the Austrian Position—Cadorna's Requirements—Scope of the self-contained Offensive of the late Summer—Success of the Thrust on the Bainsizza Plateau—Capture of Monte Santo—The Three Weeks Operations on Monte San Gabriele—Results and Captures of the August–September Offensive—Its Cost, Consequences, and Limitations.

FOR a comprehension of Italy's successes and of Italy's disaster in 1917, an examination of General Cadorna's strategical plan, and of the reasons which influenced him in its formation and development, is essential. Before the outbreak of hostilities, and long after they had begun, the advantages of position rested with the enemy. Everywhere the Austrian overlooked the Italian. He could choose at will his points of attack. He was supplied with a tremendous weight of guns and ammunition. The population of Austria-Hungary was double that of Italy, and its resources for the production of war material were incomparably greater. During the earlier years of the war, and till the Russian revolution, this handicap was lessened because of Austria-Hungary's engagement in the Russian theatre of hostilities. Before the Russian upheaval took place, the revolutionary organization had permeated the Russian armies, a fact which was well known in Berlin and Vienna, and consequently, during 1917, the best divisions of neither of the Central Empires were employed on

the Eastern front. After the collapse of Brussiloff's last offensive, the beginning of which took the German and Austrian High Command by surprise, the soldiers of both these enemy powers began to flow westwards, those of Austria to the Italian front.

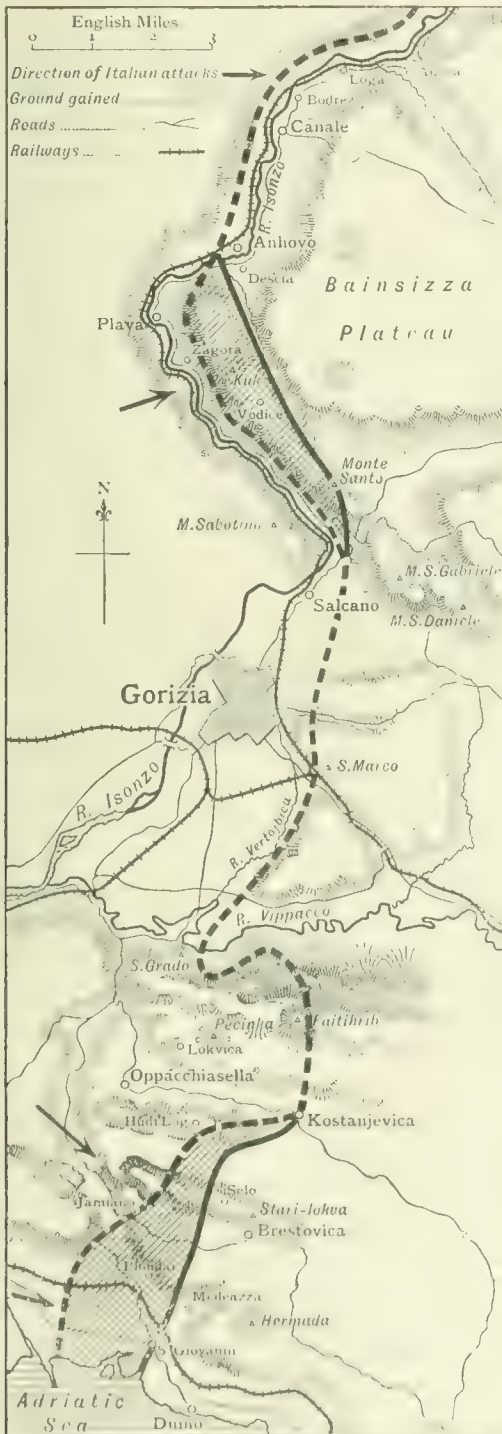
From the beginning General Cadorna had elected to throw practically his whole striking force on a short front at the eastern extremity of the line, leaving a tenuous flank stretched along the outer rim of the mountains for 400 miles. This would have been impossible strategy, except for Russia's undertaking to keep Austria heavily engaged in the East; but while that condition was maintained, Austria could not dispose of sufficient forces in the West to withstand the Italian thrust on the Isonzo, and at the same time attack the Italians through one or other of the valleys which lead from the mountains into Italy. The soundness of Cadorna's plan was made apparent in 1916, for when Austria attempted her offensive in the Trentino, she not only lost the flower of her invading forces there, but huge numbers of men in Galicia and the

Gorizia position into the bargain. But when Russia began to fail, the first tremors of her shaking resolution were felt on the Italian front. The equilibrium which had been maintained, and which the Italians had contrived by their great skill, especially in engineering, to maintain and, whenever the smallest opportunity presented itself, to incline in their own favour, was certain to be upset to their disadvantage.

Two plans offered themselves to the mind of a commander who had to judge solely on grounds of military expediency. The first was to strike with all the forces that could be mustered at the Austrian position beyond Gorizia with a view to penetrating to Laibach, and so, by seizing the main routes of supply, to compel a general retreat on the part of the enemy. An enterprise of that kind could be carried out only with the help of great forces of men and guns from France and Great Britain, both of which powers were deeply committed to the offensives in Artois and Flanders on the Western front. The alternative was to withdraw from the advanced and rather costly position on the Carso and mark time. But political reasons told against this Fabian plan, and there was always the expectation of a revulsion of feeling among those enemy nationalities, such as Czechs, Slovaks, and Dalmatians, whose adherence to the Hapsburg dynasty was doubtful. In the upshot, neither plan was adopted; but a middle one, by which the Italians undertook a vigorous offensive of their own. This offensive would at any rate synchronize

over a considerable length of time with the French and British offensives, from which so much was hoped. The Allied contribution to the Italian effort was a number of batteries of medium to heavy guns, in which from first to last the Austro-Hungarian forces had been and were markedly superior.

This offensive began in May, and during its earliest stages the weight of Austrian troops released from the East began to be felt. The restricted aim was to obtain command of the roads leading to Trieste. Of the two main roads leading to Trieste, one from Monfalcone follows the coast-line; the other, starting from Gorizia, goes up the valley of the River Vipacco, from where the river falls into the Isonzo, and turns southwards. Between these two roads is the formidable barrier of the Carso plateau, 10 to 12 miles broad, and intersected with many defiles and depressions, which the enemy had fortified. The coast road is commanded for the whole of its 12 miles from the southern cliffs of the Carso; it could not be used till that threatening plateau was conquered. In 1916 the Italians ended the year's campaign by capturing Gorizia and securing a strong foothold on the western half of the Carso, their line, when the new offensive began in May, extending like an exaggerated note of interrogation over it, thus ?. The upper half of the figure began at the height of San Grado, and comprised within its curve the heights of Volkovnia, Faitihrib, and Pecinka. It stopped just short of the road junction of Kostanjevica,



Map illustrating the Italian Offensive of May, 1917

and then turned south-westwards to Hudi-Log, Lokati, and to Jamiano, where three roads met, in the hollow of the Vallone, and thence descended from the plateau through Bagni to the coast.

North of Gorizia is the Bainsizza plateau, the pendant to the Carso on the south. Just as the Carso must be held before the coast road could be used, so the Bainsizza plateau must be conquered before the northern road to Trieste could be travelled. But the Bainsizza plateau, and comprised in it the mass of Monte San Gabriele, commands the Carso also; consequently, before Trieste could be reached, an Italian commander must not merely conquer the Carso, but must take the whole of the strongly fortified Bainsizza positions north and east of Gorizia.

General Cadorna dealt with this problem when, after a three days' bombardment preceding May 14, he began an action on a twenty-mile front north and south of Gorizia, by selecting the Austrian positions covering the western approaches to the Bainsizza plateau for the opening phases of the attack. This assault, dashing but methodical in view of the great difficulties, lasted five days, and, roughly, extended itself from the north southwards. On May 10 the Italians crossed the Isonzo 10 miles north of Gorizia, at Bodrez, captured that village, and Hill 383, east of Plava. This force was in strength a division. A more formidable movement lower down the river captured Mont Kuk, which had long held out, and Mont Vodice, both of them important outliers of the pla-

teau. Next day the Austrians counter-attacked the division which had crossed at Bodrez, but failed to throw them back, and two days later the Italians made a further advance to Hill 652, south-west of Vodice, and the southern bastion of the whole Plava position. Thus a firm footing

the second part of it into execution. On May 23, more than a week later than the first movements, he sent forward the Italian Third Army on a wide front south of Gorizia from Faitihrib down to the sea. The Austrians were taken by surprise, and the shortness of the violent preliminary



Preparing the Way for the Infantry; remarkable photograph of an Italian gas attack

had been secured on the south-western outposts of the Bainsizza plateau, and the division which had crossed at Bodrez to inaugurate the movement could be safely withdrawn. In these five days the Italians had captured, besides the key positions, more than 6000 prisoners.

Having thus drawn the attention of the Austrians to this northern wing of his attack, General Cadorna put

bombardment, which lasted only ten hours instead of three days, gave them no opportunity of revising preparations which had been made in contemplation of a resumption of the northern attack. From the road junction at Kostanjevica to the sea the Italians went forward in a long step over the plateau positions. They took 9000 prisoners on the first day; and added another 1000 on the 24th.

Their progress was assisted by a flanking fire from British monitors off Duino. The Italian artillery on the land side had furthermore been reinforced by ten British batteries of heavy guns.

The 25th May saw a renewal of the attack. The Italian 7th Army Corps stormed the heights between Medeazza and Flondar, and so laid the way open to the *Hermada massif*. Farther north the Austrians were driven out of their positions east of Hudi-Log. The Italian gains were enlarged on the following two days in the southern extremity of their line till they had crossed the lower reaches of the River Timavo and occupied San Giovanni. Here they halted and consolidated their new line. The last three days' fighting had added another 5000 prisoners to those already taken; and to distant observers the prospect of conquering the heights of Hermada, the most important outpost on the way to Trieste, seemed inviting.

But, as in greater movements throughout the war, the effect of surprise had now been exhausted and the momentum was slackening; and the subsequent occurrences may be taken to form a practical commentary on the supposition that if the Entente Powers had committed themselves to a much larger offensive on this front the Central Empires would have been unable to resist it. General Boroevicz, commanding the Austro-Hungarian forces, had now realized the character of the attack on him and its possibilities, and called imperatively for reinforcements. They reached him, not, it is to be supposed,

directly from the Russian front, but from reserves which, now that there was no immediate prospect of their being wanted elsewhere, could be safely sent to the Italian theatre of war. On the night of May 31 these reinforcements were sent in to begin a series of counter-attacks designed to recover the positions lost before the Italians had time to consolidate them. The earliest of these were counter-attacks directed at the heights of Kuk and Vodice on the Plava extension of the Bainsizza plateau, and failed completely. The Italians kept all their gains. But in the southern sectors, opposite the *Hermada massif*, the Austrians forced them to give up the useful ground which they had captured at Medeazza, and from which they threatened to turn the last great obstacle on the way to Trieste. Thus, with a slight but significant reduction of their gains, the Italian thrust came to an end by the 1st of June. It had gained ground and had captured in all 24,000 prisoners. The Austro-Hungarian *communiqués* claimed an equal, even a greater number, though not more than 14,000 were admitted. But the Italian losses in assaulting the strong Austrian positions were heavy; and could have begun to approach equality with those of the enemy when General Boroevicz was obliged to counter-attack. The total casualty list of the Italians to the end of May, killed, wounded, and missing, was 130,000. The Austrians lost about 104,000. Successful offensives are always expensive: they were especially costly in these mountainous regions, where such great superiority

of prepared and strongly-gunned positions rested with the Austro-Hungarian defenders.

It is worth while to reflect on these discrepancies in the value and the cost of even successful offensives, because they throw light on that war-weariness which gradually spreads through the most devoted and determined of beligerent peoples, and are the results of uncontrollable waves of feeling. Relevant to this point is the story of another action which was fought by the Italians on the Trentino front during June, 1917, and began by achieving a success that melted away afterwards like the snows of its Alpine surroundings. The Austrian offensive of the year before had failed, but all the positions it had flowed over were not relinquished by the invaders. They retained a very valuable jumping-off place for a renewed attack on the villages of the Setti Commune. It was a region due north of Asiago, on the outer rim of the saucer-like plateau which slopes down to that little town. In the mountain system about the Agnella Pass the Austrians occupied a great wedge thrust forward between the Val Brenta and the Vallarsa, and thus, while secure against any Italian advance, preserved for themselves a downhill road should they again elect to attack Asiago on the way to the plain.

The Italian General in command determined to reduce this wedge by attacking that part of it which, including more than one summit, is called Monte Ortigara. It was a very difficult enterprise, and afterwards the probability became a certainty that its

capture could not be enlarged so as to produce decisive results. It was undertaken against the advice of the older officers of the Alpini, who were given the task to perform it. Nevertheless they did it; and in its carrying out the action was a model of co-operation and valour. The Alpini had to climb bare slopes of rock and shale, and the action, which began on June 10, in appalling rain and wind, was immediately successful in giving the assaulters one of the summits of Monte Ortigara and other positions on the heights of Monte Farno and Monte Zebio. The Austrians hurried up reinforcements and counter-attacked without result, and for nine days the Alpini held on in the most trying conditions to the ground they had won. In these mountain solitudes, clothed in ice, assailed by storms, the transport of materials for consolidating or improving a position is tedious, and to any but those who have accomplished it would seem impossible. Trenches have to be blasted, and in any exposed position casualties are multiplied by the splinters of rock which fly when enemy shells burst on them. A position when first taken has to be maintained on the barest necessities of food, water, and munitions.

These were the circumstances in which the Alpini stood their ground, till on the 19th of June the opportunity came for another dash forward. It was well and accurately supported by the Italian guns, and three hours after the attackers had gone forward they had captured the summit of Ortigara and a thousand prisoners whom the artillery fire had driven to shelter.

The Italian aeroplanes did excellently throughout the war, their aviators handling big machines with the dexterity usually associated with small ones, and they never did better than in the difficult air currents of mountain warfare. Nearly 150 of them supported the attack on Ortigara, and contributed to the capture of the peak by bomb dropping. But in spite of the bravery and resolution of all arms the conquest of Ortigara was a barren one, for the position could not be held. It was vulnerable to Austrian guns from heights which dominated it, and these, massed against the Alpini, pelted them unceasingly. A counter-attack in great strength, which was begun on June 25 and lasted two days, drove these brave men from the summits they had won, and, worse than that, so shattered their ranks that only a few of them escaped. As an enterprise, the "successful" attack on Ortigara was costly and useless; and it spread dissatisfaction among some of the most capable fighters in the world.

There were several influences at work in Italy to sap the resolution of the Army, so that any disaffection with regard to leadership was much to be regretted; but it is not too much to say that grumblings with regard to this or that General were insignificant beside the efforts of the pacifists and what the French called the "defeatists". Italy was feeling the strain of the war. Food supplies suffered not so much from scarcity as from defects of transport; and there were, from first to last in Italy, political currents which seldom flowed in unison towards "*la victoire integrale*". One

source of ill-timed controversy must be mentioned, and it was that which arose from the conflicting ideals of those who aspired to the formation of a Greater Italy as the outcome of the war; of those who would be satisfied, like Signor Giolitti and his party, with the "*parecchio*", or the little that could be had without too great a sacrifice; of the Socialists and Extremists who opposed the war as capitalistic; and of the Clerical pacifists. Italy's least demands at the beginning of the war included the retrocession of the Trentino, the cession of Trieste; and, in general, a rectification of frontiers which would not put her territories at the mercy of an attack by her neighbours in Austria. The possession of Trieste was vital to her, for she had no base on the Adriatic to compete or compare with it, whereas Austria, holding Trieste, Pola, and Cattaro, could dominate the Adriatic.

The advantages which Austria possessed in the Adriatic from the very beginning of the war, were greater even than those which her strategic frontiers gave her on land. The harbour at Venice is for all practical purposes an artificial one: and for the purposes of sea warfare it offers only very secondary advantages. The work which the Italian navy did in the first years of the war, when the Duke of the Abruzzi held high command in it, is one which reflects the greatest credit on its enterprise, its spirit, and the ingenuity with which it held in check the Austrian submarines, and small surface craft which infested the chain of islands running from Pola to Durazzo.

From the nullification of Austrian domination of this sea to the conversion of the Adriatic into an Italian lake was a far cry; but the idea of an Italian hold of the coast-line, including that of Dalmatia, and extending to Durazzo and Valona, was not beyond the



THE DUKE OF THE ABRUZZI, who commanded the Italian Fleet in the early stages of the War.

vision of some of the Greater Italy school.

Their ideas led to conflicts of opinion, not merely among Italians who believed these aspirations to have in them the germ of future conflict, and indeed to be impossible of realization, but to dissatisfaction among the Croats, Slovenes, Dalmatians, the Montenegrins, and Bosnians, and all those races, classed under the generic name of Jugo-Slavs, who desired access to the Mediterranean, as well as among

the Albanians, and among Italy's allies, the Serbs and the Greeks. The Adriatic Question is in fact as difficult as the Balkan Question, of which it is a part, and in the middle of the year 1917 the discussion of it bristled with opportunities for dissension. They were brought to a head by the announcement of a new departure in the policy of Baron Sonnino, the Italian Foreign Minister, by which Albania, one of the claimants to a share of the Adriatic coast, was declared an independent State under the protection of Italy. There was a fierce debate in the Italian Chamber on Baron Sonnino's policy, which, nevertheless, was so essentially sound that his defence of it finally put an end to criticism; and the discussion veered to an attack on the conduct of internal affairs.

The task of Signor Orlando, the Italian Minister of the Interior, was no less difficult than that of Baron Sonnino, and his critics were more numerous. He had on the one hand the opposition of Socialistic elements, and on the other the fault-finding of those who urged him to curb the activities of propagandists, pro-Germans, and pacifists. The pro-German propaganda, directed from Germany with the aid of a few willing listeners, was subtle and unscrupulous. It did a great deal of harm, and the distrust of Italy's Allies, especially of Great Britain, which was sown by it, was fostered by the stringency of food and fuel supplies, and by the fact that the Italian armies, though they had done so well, did no better. Gross but ingenious libels on Great Britain, and on the treatment of Italy, were



Italy and the Adriatic Question: the international boundaries of the outbreak of the Great War

circulated in industrial centres, such as Turin, by the Germans; and because what should have been everybody's business was nobody's business, no steps were taken to counter them. From the industrial centres they spread to the army; and it is probable that the Russian revolution, which was so damaging to the military situation, had yet another effect of inflaming the anarchistic and "international Socialistic" elements existing in every country.

Some of the effects became perceptible in the front lines of the army in June. There had been a regrettable incident on the Carso front during the first week of it. New brigades had been brought in to replace those which had been worn out by the fighting, and one of these, arriving from a locality where pacifist propaganda had been rife and unchecked, displayed signs of its influence that reached the ears of General Cadorna. A warning which he addressed to the Government was quickly justified. On Sunday, June 3, the Austrians began to bombard the Italian lines from Gorizia to Duino, and concentrated the greatest volume of fire on the positions the Italians held at Faitihrib. A strong attack by two battalions of picked troops followed up the fire, and they gained the Italian first-line trenches. They were dislodged after a bitter struggle and few of them regained their own lines, so at this point of the line at any rate, which was held by a Roman brigade, pacifism was at a discount. South of Faitihrib the battle extended itself on June 4 all along the ground which the Italians

had won, but which had not yet been fortified. Two sectors of the attack were most furiously assailed; the more northerly one being that of the Carso, near Kostanjevica, and the southerly one on the slopes of the Hermada range of heights. The Carso attack swayed backwards and forwards for three days; hills were taken and retaken; an Italian brigade, one of the most famous, the Grenadiers, which had been 6000 strong in May, came out of this desperate encounter with only a thousand men.

In the end the Austrian attack failed. But in the Hermada sector the Austrians had the advantage of position as well as of guns: the Italians were far from having been able to dig themselves in; and one of the Italian brigades sent up to take the place of another, which had need of rest after the exertions of the May assault, was that already mentioned as having been subject to pacifist influences. It was indeed put to a heavy trial, and there is no need to deny the weight or fury of the Austrian attack; but the fact remains that the resistance of this brigade was feeble, and that it involved the whole line in difficulties. In spite of it the courage of the other Italian troops nearly saved the position by a counter-attack; but not quite, and the melancholy result was that the retirement and the surrender of a part of the pacifists left other troops in the air. Many of these were cut off, and these resisted, without food or water, till their last cartridge was spent and a remnant forced to surrender.

No other regrettable events either in the local leadership or in the *moral*

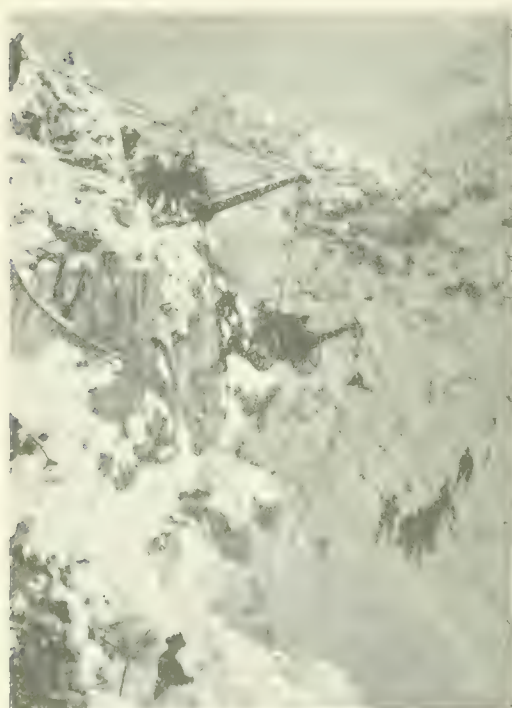
of the armies received the advertisement of publicity during June; but a feeling of dissatisfaction was in the air and a kind of poison gas of propaganda floated into the trenches whichever way the wind blew. Meanwhile the military situation was altering to Italy's disadvantage; and Italy had fewer illusions than were cherished in Great Britain that in Russia all would yet be well. It was known from Austrian prisoners that the doctrines and authority of the Soviets had permeated the whole of the Russian front, and that Russian soldiers had carried fraternization to the point of selling their arms and ammunition to their nominal enemies; it was known also that, unless the unforeseen happened, the bulk of the Austro-Hungarian forces from the Pripet to the Carpathians would presently be released for service on the Italian front. It was true that an offensive by General Brussiloff was promised; and, though the Italians were sceptical about its possibility, it did actually take place, to the surprise of everybody except Brussiloff and Korniloff. These two Russian patriots, in fact, led the Russian horse to the water and got his head into it: but he had hardly begun to drink before he turned and bolted, leaving the situation so much worse than before that neither Germans nor Austrians had any further need for considering Russia as an enemy. Their troops were released accordingly, and the sole question as to their employment on any of the Entente fronts was as to the length of time required for their transportation. The pledge given by the

Central Empires that no troops should be moved from the Eastern front while negotiations were in progress deceived no one, not even the Russians. It can scarcely have imposed upon those Internationalists in all countries who believed, in a species of moral insanity, that cessation of their own country's efforts to win the war would infect the rulers of Germany with similar ideas. The one element of uncertainty was where the masses of troops moved from the East would be employed.

It was clear that some would be used to stem any further Italian effort. General Conrad von Hoetzendorff transferred his head-quarters to Laibach in order to keep in direct touch with the operations; and the Emperor Karl joined him. General Borojevicz remained in charge on the Gorizia front; and a command was given to General Koevess, transferred from the Roumanian front as soon as it was certain that Russia had no further help to give in that quarter. Guns in increasing numbers were collected, and the task which confronted General Cadorna in attempting to break through the Austrian defences was one which no one unfamiliar with the surroundings could rightly grasp.

No conflict was ever fought over more varied or difficult ground. The rugged ridges of the mountains converging round the Conca of Tolmino; the barren and steep slopes of the Monte Santo; the hilly amphitheatre to the east of Gorizia; the naked, stony Carso table-land rising in a series of terraces pitted with caverns and treacherous stretches of low lying

land; the frowning bulwark of the Hermada; such was the country over which the Generalissimo had to strike. The front at which his blows would be aimed was chequered with a series of strongholds connected by a continuous curtain of trenches, mostly threefold,



Campaigning Difficulties on the Italian Front: hauling guns up a precipitous hillside

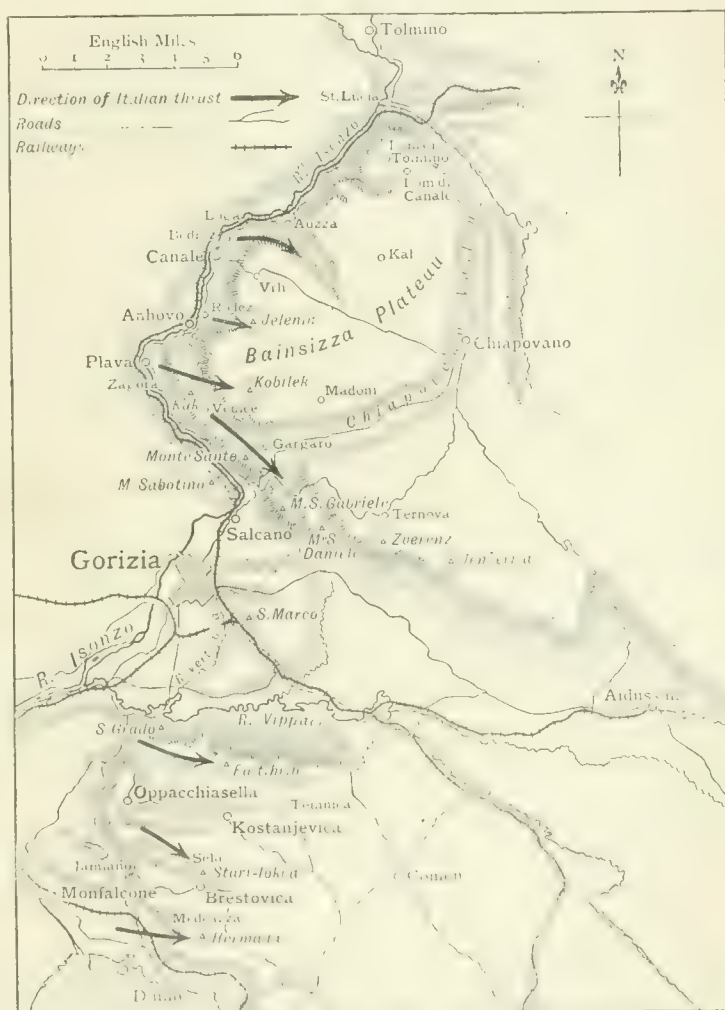
and in some places fivefold. It was defended by infantry divisions in weekly, almost daily, process of augmentation, and by more than 2000 guns of all calibres along a thirty-seven mile front, or one gun to every thirty yards. These guns were the minimum observed, others were concealed, more were on their way. The only open question was whether Great Britain and France should in any way diminish

their own effort in order to lend aid to Italy. The question was discussed, and the need for stiffening the Italian artillery was understood by the soldiers of all the Allies, for Cadorna's effort in May could have been pushed much farther had not the ammunition run perilously near the margin of safety, or had not the reserves of guns been too small to permit of what artillery there was being used to its fullest capacity.

But it was not thought possible to give General Cadorna all that he needed to ensure success. The unity of command had not reached a point at which it was possible to balance with exactitude, and without reference to national predilections, the disposal of the Entente forces, or to pool them in the ideal sense. Rather had the strategy of the Entente Generalissimos resolved itself into the method of each nation's army doing its best in its own sector, and thus lending a parallel co-ordination to the others rather than a combined concentration. General Haig, and General Pétain, and General Cadorna had each his own task to perform, and the first two of these had already perceived too clearly the results of dissipation of effort to be inclined to exaggerate them by any further commitments of their forces in any theatre but their own. It was proposed at the Conference in Paris (July 25) to delay the Italian offensive till after the campaigning season in France and Flanders. This idea was rejected, because October would probably be as much too late for Italian as it was for further Franco-British operations. The wisdom acquired after the event

can now perceive that this course might have been the best one; it was not adopted, and a self-contained Italian offensive was decided upon. It remains only to note that on the eve of its launching a Papal Note was promulgated which, without discriminating between the aims or the bloodguiltiness of the belligerents, begged them all alike to seek peace. The spirit which dictated it was praiseworthy; all the nations were at one with Pope Benedict XV in a longing for peace, whatever the determination of the handful of bloodthirsty autocrats who govern Germany might be; but the effect of it was to damp the ardour of Italy. Happily the army as a whole remained stanch, and when the day of battle came the troops showed all their old bravery and endurance.

now involved, and Cadorna's plan was to ram in his reserves at any point where the weak spot should be found by the first attack. The infantry action



Map illustrating the Italian Offensive of August, 1917

The actions which Cadorna projected in August, 1917, and began with a rolling volume of fire on the 18th, differed in strategy and extent from those of May, when two parallel attacks alternating with one another were delivered. The whole front from Tolmino to the sea was

developed on the 19th; and it seems clear that the Austrians anticipated the heaviest blow on the Carso with a subsidiary attack towards Hermada, the shortest cut to Trieste. The Italians made progress in both of these sectors. Towards Hermada they

reached again the line from which they had been ousted by counter-attack in June, and the heights were pounded by Italian naval guns mounted on pontoons and by British monitors. On the Carso, in the neighbourhood of Selo, a battle of giants between the Italian Grenadiers and the Austrian 12th Division resulted in the annihilation of the Austrians, who lost 4000 prisoners from this division alone, though it had a deserved reputation for its stubbornness. On the more northerly terraces of the Carso, rising from the Vippacco Valley, the Austrian resistance was at its strongest and densest, and little headway was made by the Italians, though they got some way forward south of Faitibrib; and farther north, in the Gorizia plain, they were content to mark time with their artillery.

But meanwhile the weak spot had been found, and a gap, opened indeed on the night of the 18th, began to widen alarmingly in the Austrian defences on the 19th. The Italians began to drive in their wedge from the same spot as that from which their attack had opened in the spring, the Plava bridge-head. They seized the valley which divides Monte Kuk from the Bainsizza plateau on the afternoon of the 18th, and entirely deceived the Austrians as to the point where it was intended to cross the Isonzo. In the night they threw pontoons over the river, letting them down by ropes at all the unlikely places, instead of selecting the likely ones, and before dawn large Italian forces were across the Isonzo, having crossed, with little loss, at a number of points between Tolmino and Anhovo. The

morning mists helped them in their advance through the battered first-line trenches of the Austrians, and towards the more formidable line of caverns and machine-gun posts on the slopes leading steeply up from the river. They were held up, nevertheless, by a murderous machine-gun fire as soon as their intention had declared itself, and the frontal attack to which they were committed towards Jelenik threatened to cost them dear.

But as the attack developed farther north, persistence in this costly procedure became avoidable, for north of Jelenik, towards Canale and Bodrez, where it will be remembered the first feint attack had been delivered in May, two Bersaglieri brigades crossed and got round to the rim of the Bainsizza plateau, north of the village of Vrh. Vrh stands on the plateau, and a road leads up to it from Canale. This was where the break was made, and from Vrh, after some stiff but rapid fighting, the Italians began to threaten Jelenik from the north in increasing numbers. Jelenik held out for two days; when it gave way, the gap in the Austrian line had become a chasm. Vrh is on the rim of one petal of the Bainsizza plateau. Another petal, divided from the first by the mountain torrent Avscek, curls northwards towards Santa Lucia and Tolmino. It is divided nominally into two regions, the Kal, nearest to the main Bainsizza plateau, and the Lom farther north. The Italian attempt to gain a footing on this broken country was one beset with difficulties, and the Austrians were well prepared, because the Kal and Lom plateaux

protect that bridge-head at Tolmino which was so vital to them, and which was later, in 1917, to prove of such inestimable advantage to their counter offensive. In the August drive, the Italians gained a footing on the western edge.

They attempted no further advance at this point, because the breach they had made farther south towards Jelenik sufficed for their purpose. The Bersaglieri had got the Austrians on the run; the Jelenik position had been turned, and the victors were marching across the Bainsizza plateau towards the south-east, trampling down resistance as they went. On August 23 the positions south of Jelenik were carried by a new Italian assault, pushing from the region of Monte Kuk and Vodice towards the next eastward summit of Kobelik. Again success attended the movement, and with it the landmark of Monte Santo, so long the goal of Italian hopes and the cenotaph of so many Italian soldiers, was taken in reverse. It fell on August 24, its garrison and its gun-caverns yielding to the success of manœuvre what it had denied to the hammering of many weary months. Its capture kindled enthusiasm among Italian soldiers, but already they were passing eastwards and leaving it behind.

Yet in a sense it was the high-water mark of their triumph, for on each succeeding day their task became harder. The reason is expressed in one word—roads. The upland of the plateau which they had scaled is broken by ridges and roadless. Roads, made by the Italians, who from Roman

times have been the great road-makers of the world, followed their advance, but at a pace by the side of which a snail's would appear speedy; and meanwhile the Italian soldiers panted for water in the fierce heat. Guns could be dragged up only by exertions comparable to those in the mountains; so that by August 27 the advance reached its limit, held up by Austrian fire, as well as by the lack of means to counter it. The "farthest east" of the advance was Volnik, a hill which is about 2 miles short of the Chiapovono Valley. Here the Austrians put up a useful rear-guard action in a well-prepared position, and though the rear-guard perished, the retreating guns were saved (August 27).

From this point onward the fire of the attack began to die down in spurts of flame, the most conspicuous of which in the three weeks which followed was the attack on Monte San Gabriele. The capture of Monte Santo had allowed the Italians for the first time to attack San Gabriele closely from the north, and to ensconce themselves on a hill from which they could turn its defences. But into so strong a fortress had the Austrians converted the height, and so well were its defences protected by the guns on its neighbour, San Daniele, that even now the effort on its capture resolved itself into a siege. The hill Veliki Hrib, which the Italians had seized at the first rush, resolved itself eventually into the lever that was to move the mountain; and from it on September 3 the Italians launched an attack in three columns which won its way in an hour

to the peaks. They rushed a precipitous and fire-swept slope, they stormed rock-cut trenches and machine-gun nests, they held down the Austrians in their caverns; as one witness of their feat said, they performed the impossible; and having performed sat down, in a position smitten by Austrian shells from the guns to east and south, to hold on. The struggle went on from first to last for three weeks, during which the Italians, having mopped up the six battalions which had originally formed the garrison of Monte San Gabriele, sustained the shock of thirty-one battalions, thrown in to wrest their gains from them. The losses on both sides were very severe; and while the Italians remained masters of what they had won, the Austrian expenditure of men sufficed to prevent them from enlarging their gains and so to convert the Austrian defeat into a complete disaster. If all Monte Gabriele could have been captured and held, with the approaches to Monte San Daniele, the whole of the Austrian position east of Gorizia would have been imperilled; the capture of half of it compelled the Austrians to devote all their energies to keeping the Italians back at this point, and so prevented them from counter-attacking the unconsolidated Italian positions on the Bainsizza plateau.

On the Southern Carso the fighting was prolonged into September, where till late in August the Italian Third Army had rested on the ground won, without attempting to improve it while the struggle for San Gabriele was in progress. On September 4 the

Austrians counter-attacked between Kostanjevica and the sea; but both near Kostanjevica and Hermada the ground won in the first rush was lost in the subsequent Italian recovery. In the northerly sector the Austrian attack was a costly failure; towards Hermada it was expensive, but it appeared to nullify any prospect of an Italian advance at this point. Such an advance, however, could not have been contemplated, for the capture of Hermada was inevitably regarded as a major operation, which, in view of their heavy commitments at other parts of the line, the Italians could not afford to undertake. On September 8-10 General Cadorna signified the fact that the major portion of his autumn campaign had come to an end by publishing a schedule of the Italian gains. They comprised 30,671 prisoners, including 858 officers, and 145 guns, of which 80 were guns of position. Among these were two of the Skoda 12-inch guns which the Austrians had been unable to get away from the Bainsizza plateau. Other booty comprised 12,000 rifles, 320 machine-guns, and 94 trench mortars.

A few clearing-up actions towards the close of September enlarged the captures by some 2000 prisoners, and improved the Italian positions, especially towards San Gabriele. Another action pushed the Austrians farther back at the south-eastern corner of the Bainsizza plateau (September 29); but these undertakings, though rather more successful than the Italian command expected, were mere rectifications of the line. They nevertheless appeared to demonstrate that, if the Italians had

possessed a greater initial momentum, and had been backed by a weight of artillery such as they had asked for, the victory might have been converted into a decisive one. But as a "push" it ceased on the second week of the month, and the full fruits of it were never gathered. This by itself might not have been sufficient cause for complaint of the want of co-operative assistance from Italy's allies if the incompleteness of the advance had not carried with it the germs of subsequent reverses. At two points essential weaknesses in the position won were apparent. In the first place, the Austrians were left in a position from which they could threaten the Tolmino bridge-head, and, should circumstances favour them, could there by not too difficult approaches threaten to pierce, and thereafter outflank, the Italian main army mass at Gorizia and south of it. In the second place, though the Italians held the southern leaf of the Bainsizza plateau, the Austrians had not been dislodged from the Lom and Kal plateau which formed its northern leaf. Consequently the Italian advance on the main plateau, though

it maintained the appearance of a strong salient thrust into the enemy lines, was no more than a salient on which, to north and south, the enemy held firm. If there had been enough weight and material to enable the Italian armies to burst out of the salient, the effect on the Austrians might have been disastrous; as things were and remained, a balance might always be struck in the favour of their adversaries should the German High Command decide to reinforce them, and to stiffen the Austro-Hungarian troops returning from Galicia. Meanwhile, it is to be observed that in spite of the victorious spirit with which the Italian Army was flushed, they had paid a heavy price for victory. They had lost 10,000 prisoners in the swaying counter-attacks, and had suffered little short of 150,000 casualties. The losses since the beginning of June, including those in the Trentino sector, and counting the constant drain of warfare over a prolonged front, were some 350,000 wounded, missing, and killed. The year's bill was double that number.

E. S. G.

CHAPTER XI

THE LAST RUSSIAN EFFORT IN 1917

Fomenters of the Russian Revolution - Lenin, Trotsky, and the Bolsheviks - Old and new revolutionaries—The Cadets, the Provisional Government, and the Coalition Government—Kerensky—Prikaz No. 1 -General Gutor's Limited Offensive - The Position between Brody and the Carpathians—Tasks assigned to the three Russian Armies of Erdelli, Belkovitch, and Korniloff- Difficulties of the Attack on Brzezany - Instability of Erdelli's Army—Korniloff's Advance and Successes- The first Signs of Indiscipline - The Break at the Junction of the Russian Eleventh and Seventh Armies—Advance of the Austro-German Divisions through the Breach—The Russian Break-down and Flight—Korniloff's appointment to Command—Extent of the Disaster.

LONG after the Russian Revolution had been consummated its origins were misunderstood and the authors unrecognized in Great Britain, and even in France. Germany, it is probable, knew them. The Revolution took its origin from the workmen and the peasants of Russia; the army was the mass which moved to accomplish it; those who actuated and inspired both, and set them in motion, were the knot of revolutionaries who had failed in 1905, but since then had worked in holes and corners in Geneva, Paris, New York, and London, often disputing fiercely on the application of the theories of Karl Marx and his Russian congener and rival, Bakunin. Among them were Plehanov, who was the founder of the Russian Social Democratic Party, but long an exile; Lenin, who was his chief antagonist, and whose name was Vladimir Uljanov; and Trotsky, who became Lenin's satellite, and whose name was Braunstein.

Lenin was by birth an aristocrat, with a lifelong feud against the Autocracy, which had delivered his brother to the scaffold. He was a man of immovable determination, and of a genius

for command which kept him at the head of the masses after he had fought his way there. His fanaticism and his ability are more clearly established than the treachery to Russia with which he was accused, and which rests on the fact that he was transported from Switzerland — where he had lived in exile and had directed the Revolutionary organization in concert



Lenin, the Bolshevik Dictator



Revolutionaries in Petrograd: a snapshot of Trotsky (on the left)

with Plehanov—with German connivance, in a German motor-car, and with German gold at his disposal. Those who have most authority to speak for Lenin declare that he had no partiality for the Germans, whose money he took, but was a single-minded fanatic who opposed all Governments, and had no ideal but that of substituting the rule of the people for them, though the way led through anarchy.

Trotsky's character and antecedents were, and are, less well defined. He was a Jew, like many others who gathered round Lenin, and some of whom were more obviously conscious

traitors than unconscious fanatics. That phrase was thrown out by M. Kerensky, the oratorical young lawyer, who had been the stormy petrel of the Revolution in the Duma, and who had risen on its wave to the position, but never the reality, of command when the revolutionary tide swept all things in Russia before it—the Duma and its parties among them. But Kerensky had not made the revolution any more than the Duma had made it. He was of less import than Prince Lvoff, or M. Rodzianko, or M. Miliukoff, who did indeed stand for something, namely, the ordered and sane intelligence of Russia as distinguished from the crazy *intelligenzia* or the classes which had neither constructive ideas nor ability, but only shibboleths. But these statesmen-politicians had no real backing: they were better known outside Russia, where they had been heard of through newspapers, than in Russia, nine-tenths of whose people cannot read, and to whom the name of Miliukoff was as little known as that of Mr. Lloyd George. The real backing lay behind the Lenins, the Plehanovs, the Trotskys, whose names were probably quite as little known, but who had thrown over the army and the industrial towns a net of socialistic catchwords and phrases, and who, with unending patience and skill, had enmeshed a great part of chaotic Russia in the secret organizations, very shortly afterwards declared, of the Soldiers and Workmen's Delegates, the Soviets.

The fact about them which the historian will most note is that this organization had taken place among

masses of people who were illiterate, and that consequently it had been propagated, not by the written but by the spoken word. It was the more permeating on that account, and it was the more binding; for among the classes which have few ideas, when an idea at last penetrates, it is supremely difficult of dislodgment. The secret of the success of Lenin, and of those of whom he was the autocratic director, was that the ideas to which he gave at last utterance had long been promulgated in Russia by thousands of whispering voices, and that the masses, hearing them at last spoken aloud, recognized and welcomed those who shouted them.

The struggle for authority in Russia after the Tsar had resigned, and the dynasty of the Romanoffs had been, to all appearance, utterly dissipated, was brief, though to onlookers it seemed to hang long in the balance. Very quickly the exiled revolutionaries streamed back into Russia, some, like Lenin, with the benevolent aid of Germany, others, like Trotsky, who was arrested by the British authorities at Halifax, Nova Scotia, finding difficulties in the way. Among them were many whose names were known all over the world as Russian patriots—Prince Kropotkin and M. Plehanov among them—but these were, in truth, the representatives of an old-fashioned Russian patriotism, which was submerged beneath the flood of the new revolutionary doctrines; and they were themselves quickly passed over as of no account among the crowd of Zimmerwaldians, such as Grimm or East Side, New York Russian Jews with aliases concealing their Jewish origin,

such as Stekloff (Nahamkes), Zenoviev (Apfelbaum), Kamenieff (Rosenfeld). But their fate was no other than that of all others who did not bear the hallmark of the Soviets, the organizations of Soldiers and Workmen's Delegates, who were the real power in the new Russia.

The steps which were taken by these organizations, and their chosen leader and author, Lenin, were two in number, the first that of removing from power or authority any who opposed them; the second, which was complementary to this, but is of greater relevance in a history of the war, was that of destroying the army. The army, by holding aloof, had spoilt the revolution of 1905. Lenin thought that while it remained in existence it would always be a reactionary force, capable of being summoned to destroy the revolution of which he was the highest apostle. The steps by which the destruction of political and social authority in Petrograd was brought about can be briefly stated. The Executive Committee of the Duma, which included M. Rodzianko, M. Miliukoff, M. Nekrasoff, M. Kerensky (leader of the Moderate Labour Party), and M. Cheidze (leader of the Socialist Party), took over the Government of the Russian Empire on the 14th of March, 1917. It immediately appointed another body, the "Provisional Government", with Prince Lvoff at its head, and M. Miliukoff as Foreign Minister; and on the 16th this body issued its programme, of which the first clause proclaimed a complete political amnesty, and the last, while giving to soldiers certain rights, en-

joined the maintenance of severe military discipline.

On April 9 another manifesto was issued which gave signs of the concealed hand of the revolutionaries, for it declared that Russia's aim was not to subjugate or humiliate anyone; and that its object was to establish a durable peace on the basis of the rights of nations to decide their own destiny. In short, the Government of Russia was travelling towards the formula of "no annexations and no indemnities" which had been announced by the Socialist Grimm in Switzerland, and was of German origin. An All-Russia Conference of the Soviets on April 13 passed a resolution to the same effect, and before May 1 the phrase quoted above had been adopted by them. M. Miliukoff, as Foreign Minister, had previously committed himself to very different ideas. He was, therefore, the first to be evicted from the Provisional Government. The Petrograd mob hastened his departure with cries of "Down with Miliukoff!" A new coalition ministry was formed, in which two new nominees of the Soviet, MM. Skobeleff and Tseretelli, appeared.

All this time the Russian troops had done no fighting. An informal armistice had reigned all along the front, and "fraternization" took place with the enemy on the part of both officers and men. Prince Lvoff and the Soviet, towards the end of May, issued an appeal to the troops to discontinue this state of affairs, and all news from Russia that was received in Great Britain or France conveyed the assurance that Russia would not make a

separate peace. The truth was far removed from that. The real powers, Lenin and his fellow-conspirators, had every intention that Russia should get out of the war as soon as possible; and, even while the professions of Russia's loyalty to the Allied cause were being made, the army was being inoculated with the most subtle of poisons. An Army Order was issued by the Soviet which has become known as Prikaz (Order of the Day) No. 1. It was framed by the Jew Nahamkes, and enjoined the troops as free men to render no obedience or respect to their officers. It was this Prikaz No. 1 which was eventually to convert the Russian army into an undisciplined mob. It was intended to do so.

This army disorganization was taking place under cover of political disputes which hid the real state of affairs. The Provisional Government, urged by the Soviet, pressed the Allied Governments to adopt the formula of "no annexations and no indemnities"; and a vigorous peace propaganda was set in motion by, naturally, the half-hidden Lenin Group. The Moderate Parties—the Lvoffs, the Shingareffs, the Terestchenkos.—were losing ground, and out of the turmoil presently issued the name Bolshevik. The word means "majority", as distinguished from Menshevik, meaning "minority", and was coined to denote the difference which arose some years before among the revolutionary Socialists, the Leninites being the majority, or Bolsheviks, the minority being the Plehanov party, the Mensheviks. The Bolsheviks were in the early summer of 1917 the real rulers of Russia.

though their power was not to declare itself openly till later, or to be asserted without a struggle.

First of all, on the declining power of the Coalition Cabinet Kerensky became Prime Minister, and was hailed by some Socialist and Labour parties in Great Britain and France



M. Kerensky, Prime Minister of the Coalition Cabinet in Russia

as the saviour of his country. He was supported by the Bolsheviks while he did their bidding, which included an attempt to organize a peace conference at Stockholm, and he was thrown out only when he interfered with the anarchistic revolutionary plans. He, however, did not go without a struggle, and for a long time the name of Kerensky was as widely known as any in the world. Never-

theless, he was unable to resist the pressure of the Revolutionary forces which by their upheaval had raised him to power. The struggle between him and Lenin was largely underground, but it was severe. At one time he drove Lenin into retirement and into an exile which was probably more apparent than real. This was after the Leninites, who fundamentally disapproved of any warlike action on the part of the army, had endeavoured to foment a rising in Petrograd on the eve of the offensive which the Russian army was at last prevailed upon to undertake. It was hoped by Lenin and Trotsky that this rising would effectually prevent any movement on the part of the army, the disintegration of which had not moved fast enough to satisfy them, and a reintegration of which by a partly successful offensive they greatly feared.

The chances of a successful offensive by the Russian armies was not great, for, apart from Prikaz No. 1, several occurrences had co-operated to destroy the soldierly spirit. General Alexieff had been confirmed in the office of Commander-in-Chief shortly after the Revolution; but in May he resigned a position which he felt to be impossible, and General Brussiloff was appointed early in June to take his place. He had a terribly difficult task. Undermining all his efforts were the unceasing propaganda of the Soviets, the expression of which lay in the notorious Prikaz No. 1; and unconsciously aiding their destructive influence was the so-called Committee System. The Committee System was born partly of the Soviets, partly by consent of

the various Governments, which the Soviets, the real authority, tolerated till they could overthrow them.

When the police had disappeared from Petrograd, the Soviet leaders took control. They superseded the Zemstvos, the Law Courts, the judges, by Committees, which were dominated

Commissaries who went to the army front did their work honestly, and strove to supply the peremptory needs of provisions and munitions. But introduced into the army itself the committee system was disastrous to the army's efficiency, for the committees debated everything, the officers and



A Revolutionary Scene before the Collapse of the Russian régime. A group of a Russian military college saluting the new régime outside the Duma

by the Soviet and cared little for the Government. The Committees of peasants, lawyers, tinkers, tailors, soldiers, sailors, and thieves managed everything. They took over the railways, which were on the verge of breakdown and needed only some such attention as this to collapse; they hampered rural labour; they took over the industries; they devoted their attention to supplying the army. Some of the Committees and Government

the officers' orders included. The consequence was that no general could ever be sure that an army or a division would carry out his orders; and throughout the length and breadth of the Russian lines between Riga and Stanislaw dwelt a chilling uncertainty as to whether the soldiers would fight at all.

The northern front, nearest Petrograd, was worst of all. The western or central front, nearest Warsaw, which had been under General Gourko

(removed by the Government for supposed reactionary tendencies) was a little better, but infected. The south-western front, which knew General Brussiloff best, was also the most promising. The Coalition Government and Kerensky, the then Prime Minister, believed in June that a blow might be struck here. Such action was being continually urged on the rather unstable and weak-kneed Coalition by the ambassadors of the Allies, who believed, or hoped, that if an effort were really made then the mere act of making it would pull the army together. It was felt that, riddled with propaganda as the army might be, if it could be impelled forward, its own weight and its undoubted superiority in equipment and numbers, would carry it through. So, in some fear and trembling, the offensive was ordered and General Brussiloff concurred.

The limited offensive, which was all that Russia could undertake, was limited in more senses than one. It was limited by the transport which was available to feed it; it was limited by the unknown and uncertain quality of the troops; it was limited by its leadership. Russia had several great strategists, but General Gutor was not one of them, and he had to deal with a situation which asked for more than common qualities. He was not in a position to draw up the best plan on paper, and leave the rest to the staff and the soldiers, but must choose something that was so clearly within the capacity of the forces at his disposal as to ensure that it would be done and done quickly. The one factor in his favour was that the enemy

had grown so accustomed to regard the Russian armies as negligible that any attack projected might carry with it the advantage of a surprise. Moreover, the Austro-Hungarian forces, at which his blow was rightly aimed, were by no means passionate partisans of warfare, and their loyalty to the cause of the Central Empires had been sapped by many causes, among which was the process of fraternization employed by the Germans to destroy the Russian fighting spirit.

If both sides had suffered equally in this respect General Gutor's task need not have been too difficult, for he had a great superiority in numbers—fifty-four Russian divisions against thirty mixed German, Austrian, and Turkish—and the equipment of his men was a miracle—to a Russian. Thanks largely to Russia's allies, the Russian forces in 1917 had enough artillery of all sizes, from guns of position to field-guns, trench mortars, machine-guns, and piled-up ammunition. They had plenty of armoured cars, among them a British armoured-car squadron under Commander Locker-Lampson which had already done good work in the Caucasus and Roumania. As things turned out, some of the most valuable service of this squadron was rendered, not in supplementing a Russian victory, but in mitigating the worst consequences of a Russian flight. The Russians had not as many aeroplanes as the enemy, but those which they possessed were of good type and well handled; and along the sector of front over which General Gutor proposed to operate they had plenty of field railways and good roads.

It was the irony of fate that when the Russians had the easiest of nuts to crack their teeth were gone!

General Gutor's plan was not a very good one; it seems to have succeeded in one direction because it was so open to criticism that the Germans did not expect an attack at a point where it so obviously should not have been made. The task he set his three armies, the Eleventh under General Erdelli, the Seventh under General Belkovitch, and the Eighth under General Korniloff, was that of threatening Lemberg. Lemberg would have been a prize that might have reawakened the patriotism of the disordered masses of Petrograd, or have shaken the influence, if not the propensities, of the Bolsheviks; and, even in the light of after events, it does not seem to have been a prize that should have been out of the reach of the three well-found armies in the section between Brody and the Carpathians, where General Brussiloff's great success had been won. Brussiloff's advance in the previous year, which was brought to an end partly because of the Roumanian adventure, partly because his armies had not the wherewithal to continue it, had laid open the way along the valley of the Dniester, and should have given the troops the presage of victory. Gutor's projected movement may be figured as a door with three panels which is to be pushed bodily north-westward towards Lemberg, and is to swing on its northerly hinge at the same time, so that the most southerly panel has farthest to go, the most northerly one least, and the middle one a distance

somewhere between the two. The whole length of the swinging door, or, in other words, the battle front, was more than a hundred miles. The panels were much less in aggregate breadth.

The most northerly panel was to act under General Erdelli along an 11-mile front. Its starting-point was north-west of Tarnopol, which was in Russian hands, and to the east and north of Brzezany, which may be called the centre of the enemy position. It was given the task of getting astride the railway which leads through Zloczow to Lemberg, and of which another branch goes from Brody to Lemberg. It acted on an 11-mile front.

The middle panel of the door, 10 miles in breadth, was to aim towards Brzezany, the actual battle-front being defined as from Kuropatniki to Mieczyzow. It was to get astride the steep-banked Zlota Lipa, which had been General von Bothmer's strong line of defence, and was then to strike north-westwards in the same direction as General Erdelli's army, which for its part was to reach down a helping hand towards Brzezany. If it succeeded it was to get on to the lower railway from Brzezany to Lemberg, and to push on to Bobrka, where a third railway to Lemberg led up from Halicz in the south. The task was entrusted to General Belkovitch, and, since he would have to fight his way through wooded country, intersected with ravines and a very difficult river, it was a supremely difficult one. Brussiloff had paused before it: Belkovitch, with troops of doubtful loyalty, was very unlikely to accomplish it.

Well to the south General Kornil-

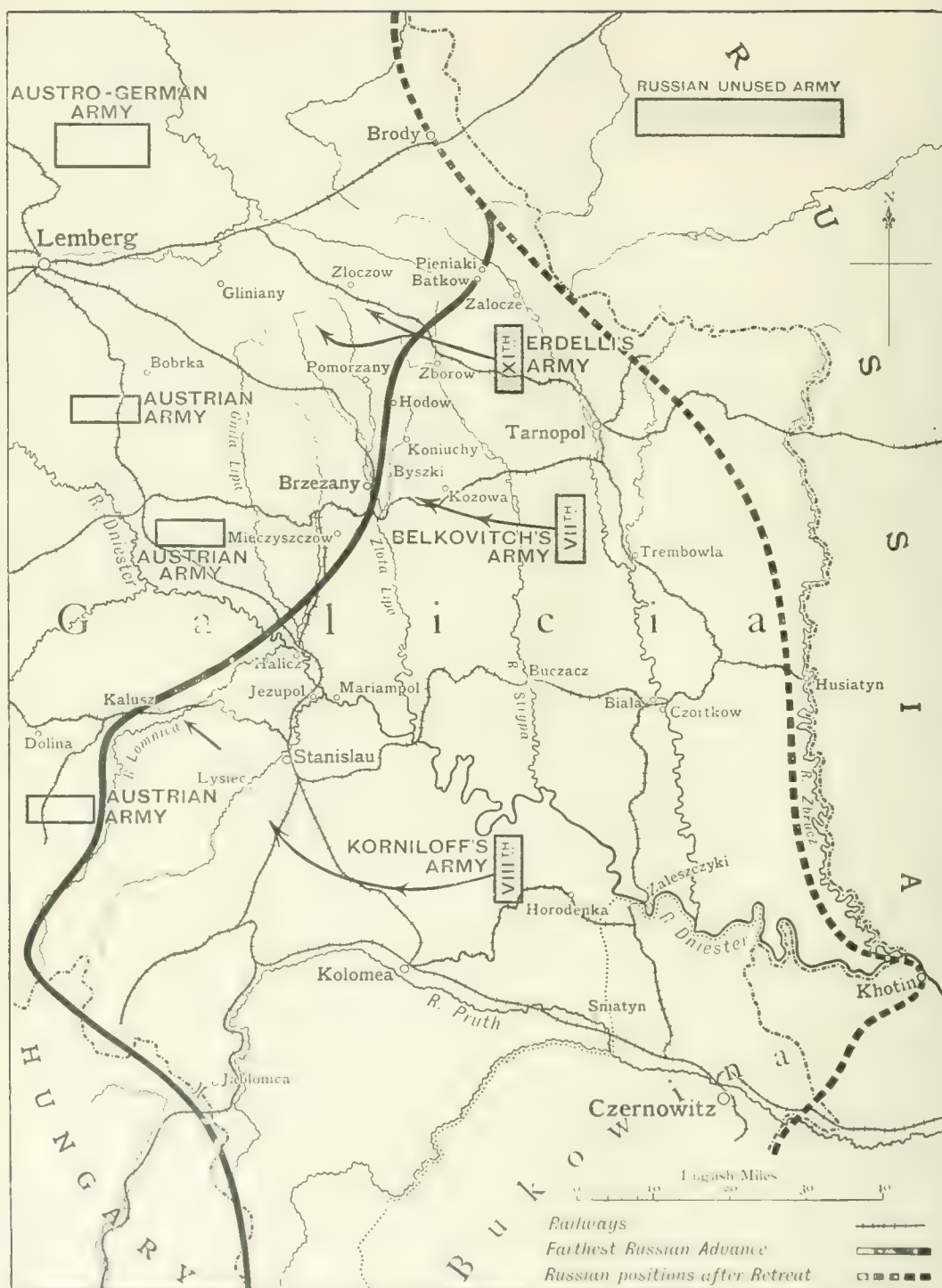


FIGURE 1. The Russian advance into Galicia, the retreat of the Russian army, and the Russian positions after the retreat

loff's army was to complete the conquest of the Halicz region, where Brussiloff had halted the year before, and was to obtain possession of the railway leading from Stanislau through Dolina. Korniloff did, in fact, more than he was asked. If he had been given all the help and all the backing he needed the movement might have achieved even more than it was expected to do. It will be seen that the general idea was that of a movement to envelop, by means of the armies of Belkovitch and Korniloff, the Turkish, Austro-Hungarian, and German divisions holding what may be described as the Brzezany sector in front of Lemberg. This sector was well wooded, and the defect in General Gutor's strategy was that he directed the greatest effort at this, the sector best equipped for defence. The consequence was that he risked a repulse which would, and did, have a demoralizing effect on troops whose *moral* was not high to begin with.

Before the advance began the divisional and brigade commanders suffered continual anxiety lest their troops should betray them, for mutinies had broken out, and everyone, from corps commander to corporal, was aware of the infiltration of the ranks by Bolshevik pacifism. These were the troops which were to be thrown, just as in the days when the army was filled with enthusiasm for the fight, at a region the tactical centre of which, Brzezany, was protected by the deep cleft of the Zlota Lipa, and high wooded hills on the east and south. The Germans had hardly believed that any Russian general would attack these

positions, and had prepared for an assault on the more northerly sector towards Zloczow. They were, however, able, by means of their system of railways, brought up to date, to transfer troops easily from one sector to another.

Prepared as the Germans were, they did not reckon on the energy of the first onslaught in the Zloczow direction. It began on July 1, after two days of excellent artillery practice; and the Finnish troops, fired possibly by the example of the Czecho-Slovak brigade, which had no illusions about the Hapsburgs, led the way in thrusting back the enemy towards the Little Strypa. The Czecho-Slovak brigade alone captured over 3200 prisoners, many of them compatriots, and a number of guns, which were turned on the enemy. Other successes were won by hard fighting of the old-fashioned kind north of Koniuchy, and the two days' work brought in over 6300 prisoners and 20 guns. It was a disagreeable surprise to the enemy command, but its effect was marred by an incident which recalls the old story of the burglar who was caught by paying attention to the spirit decanter. The enemy had left stores of wines and spirits behind them; the joyful Russian victors fell on them, and there was an end of the advance.

The advance south of Brzezany had been held up by a more serious obstacle. The men had advanced bravely, and on July 1, despite the character of the defences and the opposition they met with, had captured over 2200 prisoners. But between the Zlota Lipa and the little River

Tseniow was a death-trap, where, indeed, thousands of Austrians and Germans were killed, but thousands of Russians also were caught in a murderous cross-fire. The German *communiqué* observed that the Russian losses surpassed any measure hitherto known, which was probably untrue, for very often in the war Russian troops had been handled by their leaders regardless of sacrifice; but it was too near the truth for the time and the occasion. For the first time in the war the Russian soldier, solid and brave as he was ignorant, refused flatly to obey orders. A division which might have turned the scale refused to advance; the trenches that had been won with such bloody losses were retained, but the advance was held up.

That was not the worst. The number of prisoners taken in the two days on both sectors about Brzezany rose nearly to 20,000; but the Russian soldiers were left in the presence of their dead, and, since they were no longer advancing, had leisure to take stock of the situation. The cold fit succeeded the hot fit; the Bolshevik influence began to get to work in the most promising circumstances, and divisions began to refuse, not merely to advance, but to stay in the front line. The Russian front nearest Brzezany daily grew more unstable. Nothing was done there for several days. The Germans were therefore able to stiffen their resistance to any further advance in the sector north of Brzezany, where General Erdelli's army, the Eleventh, had won the least expensive successes. The Russian official reports record a further at-

tempt to advance towards Zloczow on July 6; but though three lines of trenches and some 700 prisoners were taken, it was clear that there was a block on the line here also, for the counter-attacks of the enemy were immediate and energetic. General Erdelli evidently could do little more than hold on, while the Seventh Army, in front of Brzezany, was an uncertain quantity. General Belkovitch's troops were becoming uncertain in every sense except a reassuring one.

There was, however, good news from the south; it appeared possible that General Korniloff might redress the balance; for on July 6 (nearly a week after the other armies had advanced, it will be noted) he began to push forward with a momentum that increased every day. On the first day he began to push forward on a broad front from either side of Stanislaw towards Dolina, and the first contact with the enemy brought in a few hundred prisoners. On July 8 the first full-dress battle was fought with due employment of artillery, and Korniloff's forces went through those of von Bothmer as if they had been paper. Jezupol was taken and Korniloff, sending forward his cavalry with his customary daring, had the satisfaction of learning that they had reached a point on the River Lukwa, 8 miles behind the enemy's first line. He took over 7000 prisoners and 50 guns, and had prejudiced the enemy's power of reaction. React the enemy did the next day, for von Bothmer, who was in command of the enemy's southern group of armies, was too good a general not to perceive the

gravity of the blow; but the army of Korniloff was now on the move, the stronger taking the weaker with them, and fighting with all the heavy zest which was characteristic of the Russians at their best.

On the 9th the resistance offered by the counter-attacks of the Third Austrian Army under von Terztyansky was borne down, another 1000 prisoners was taken, and the infantry reached the Lukwa. In two days' fighting a breach of 13 miles had been made in the enemy's lines, and the Russians had poured through in places to a depth of 7 to 8 miles. Another day's fighting and the Austrians were showing signs of throwing up their hands. General Cheremisoff's Corps, which had been the spear-head of Korniloff's attack, added another 2000 prisoners, and the army began to advance as fast as its transport would permit into the Dniester plains, south of the river. In three days Korniloff had crossed the Lomnica, taken Halicz, the most valuable of nodal points, and was pushing forward over ground which, though not easy, now offered more possibilities than any other line of advance.

The Russian Head-quarters Staff now began to realize that this was the direction into which their greatest energies should have been thrown. Reinforcements were sent to Korniloff. They came too late to improve a position which now began to be affected by the subtle influence of indiscipline and was imperilled by a situation that repeated the incidents on the Zloczow front. On July 12 General Cheremisoff took Kalusz,

his troops broke into the stores of spirits and drank themselves into a state of drunken fury such as characterized the Russian soldier at his worst. There was no possibility of further advance; but the serious question arose whether the troops, passing fast into a state of indiscipline, would hold on.

The German High Command was beginning to send in reserves; and the Russian success was practically at an end with Korniloff's announcement of the material results of his victory. He had taken 12,000 prisoners; he had reduced the 32,000 Austrians and Germans opposed to him to fragments; but he dare advance no farther than the Lomnica, and he was well aware that the best of his shock troops had gone in the effort already made. Some of his detachments made no bones about it: they merely retired from the positions they had taken and let the enemy in. "One of our regiments", according to the Russian *communiqué* of July 18, "began to leave." A Russian general, Prince Gagarin, met that individual act of treachery by charging forward with some Caucasian regiments, Daghistanis, Circassians and Kabardins, carrying back the retreating regiment with them, and so restoring the situation. But it was clear that the danger-point had been reached here as elsewhere.

Hitherto the danger signals had been cautionary. General Erdelli's army was the first to speed the disaster. The Russian Head-quarters Staff announced, on July 20, that, following a strong enemy attack on the sector near Pienaki and Batkow, on the

Sereth, almost the most northerly point held by the Russian Eleventh Army, the 607th Mlynoff Regiment left the trenches "voluntarily" and retired. In plainer words, they ran, or walked, away, leaving in the air the other regiments who were bearing the brunt of the enemy attack. These had to retire under fire; the breach

cussed the advisability of obeying the order. Thereupon some of the regiments refused to obey the military command. The efforts of the commanders (and the committees) to arouse the men to the fulfilment of the commands were fruitless.

They were worse than fruitless. Every effort at reorganization opened



A Remarkable Photograph of the Russian Debacle: steadfast troops holding up a motor lorry and removing fugitive Russian soldiers

was widened; the enemy walked in as the Russians walked off. The Russian *communiqué*, with that resigned philosophy which overtakes Russia when things are so bad that they appear beyond remedy, observed that "our failure" was explained to a considerable degree by the fact that, under the influence of the Bolsheviks, several detachments, having received the command to support the attacked detachments, held meetings and dis-

widened the breach. By a miracle of chance, or design, the enemy attack which had pierced the front was directed so that it should drive a wedge between the Eleventh (Erdelli's) and the Seventh (Belkovitch's) Armies. The locality of the opening was Zborow, just at the junction of two main roads, one branching north-west to Zalocze, one south-west to Tarnopol. A whole division, the 6th Grenadiers, threw down its arms and de-

sented. For a moment the Russian Head-quarters Staff could not believe in the magnitude of the disaster which hung over them, though in their hearts they must have realized its possibility. General Brussiloff, at Tarnopol, took the direction of the group of armies out of the hands of General Gutor and gave it to General Korniloff. The remedy was futile, as the causes of the disaster were outside the culpability of General Gutor, and Korniloff could not, by any display of generalship, instil courage or discipline into armies which had lost both, and time was wasted in transferring commands. Meanwhile the catastrophe was growing as the waters of a reservoir gather in volume when the crack in the dam becomes a gulf through which they pour.

In a day the mischief was done, and not for years to come will the full story of the spreading catastrophe be told. All the accounts of it are of those who saw, as in a nightmare, the figures of fugitives spreading fan-like eastwards. There is a story of a man on a white horse dashing through Bucacz shouting that the German cavalry was at hand; he was a German spy, afterwards arrested and shot. The enemy was then 30 miles away, but he was but a symbol of the

obsession of flight which had seized on multitudes of deserters, who mingled with transport lorries and ambulance wagons, and threw away their arms in order to make greater haste. Some of the British Armoured-car Squadron tried to dam the panic by placing their



The Russian Retreat: British officers of the armoured-car section join in the efforts to stop runaways

cars across the road and threatening the fugitives with sticks and revolvers. It was in vain; the rout flowed past such puny obstacles, and was stirred to a fury of retreat by the rumours circulated that the front had been pierced at two points, and that the way of retreat to Tarnopol was cut off.

The breach continued ever to widen; on the night of July 20 it was 20 miles in width, from the banks of the Gra-

berk to just south of Zborow, and the Germans, with nothing to stop them, were soon within cannon-shot of Tarnopol. On the evening of July 21 their heavy and light guns were playing on that garden city, and everyone who was in it was striving to get out. Every train that could be got away went out with men clinging to its foot-boards, on its carriage roofs, on the buffers. Thousands of civilians joined the flight on foot. Surging about them were the soldiers of the broken Russian divisions; many drunk, or bent on pillage and destruction. They broke into shops and houses, they committed outrages, they betrayed the worst instincts of men whose bonds of discipline and conduct have been broken. In all this terror and calamity there were some regiments which stood firm, and with iron hearts dealt firmly with their traitorous comrades. Two regiments which had revolted were surrounded by loyal troops and disbanded; when they refused, one of the Government Commissaries, Kalinin, abandoning Socialistic principles, bade the artillery fire on them. They surrendered and gave up their arms—no great loss. But while here and there artillery was used ruthlessly to stop the retreat, the flying infantry took revenge on other artillery by shooting the gun-teams, or cutting the traces, and fighting the gunners.

The official *communiqué* of July 22 and 23 noted with a kind of despairing frankness that the Russian troops, having manifested absolute disobedience to the commanders, were continuing to retreat to the Sereth, and were surrendering to the enemy. The



Commander Oliver Locker-Lampson, M.P., C.M.G.,
commanding the British Armoured-car Squadron in Russia
(From a photograph by Elliott & Fry)

retreat continued, added the bullets, without a break, and it was due to the absolute instability of troops which discussed whether to obey or not to obey orders. Officers, alone steadfast in the performance of their duty, were sacrificed in great numbers; some of them committed suicide in their rage and despair. Commander Locker-Lampson and Lieutenant-Commander Smiles, of the British Armoured-car Squadron, which endeavoured to bring some sort of order into the Russian ranks about them, gave a strange impression of the progress of the flight. Three of their squadron were spread across the road to impede, or hearten, the retreating Russians to the point of fighting some sort of rear-guard action. Other cars initiated some sort of a counter-resistance, and Commander Smiles's cars

held up the oncoming Germans and Austrians in one sector for some hours. The Russians stopped with the cars till the Austrians and Germans advanced shouting, but then flung down their rifles and ran, or stormed the cars for protection. Some of the cars were lost, and though others did succeed in inducing the Russians to fight here and there, such incidents were unable to make any impression on the wave of flight rolling unsteadily eastwards.

It flooded Tarnopol, which the enemy occupied on July 22, and the last scenes there were symbolic of the best and the worst of the Russian—on the one hand a cadet battalion reducing the rioting soldiers to order and firing the stores, on the other hand rioters sacking the town amid scenes which would have disgraced any soldiers on earth. The stores were destroyed in Tarnopol; Koziowa was set on fire, and most of the stores destroyed there also; in Husiatyn the Russian infantry threw down their rifles and machine-guns, and then turned on a man who had spread panic and killed him. But

the retreat never stopped, though it is clear, from the account which Commander Locker-Lampson furnished of the doings of the British Armoured-car Squadron, that if there had been any cohesion among the Russians, one determined counter-attack might have held up the oncoming enemy. The enemy did not advance fast; they were unable to believe for some time the incredible truth that two Austro-German divisions were herding twelve Russian divisions before them like sheep.

It soon was clear that the disintegration of the army in Galicia was a symptom of a disease that had seized the whole of the Russian forces. On July 25 the Russian Headquarters' *communiqué* announced that on the Dvinsk front, on the integrity of which depended the defence of Riga, whole divisions had left the trenches without waiting for an enemy attack. Some refused to obey any commands. The defection was chiefly due to the penetration of Bolshevik doctrines; it was greatly aided by German propa-

ganda, which, with great ingenuity, appealed to the land hunger of the Russian peasants, and urged them to get back to their villages to share in the plunder of landed estates that were to be divided among the people. Korniloff meanwhile was trying to reorganize the fragments of the retreating armies.



One of the British Armoured-cars on the Russian Front during the Summer Campaign of 1917

That which he had commanded was not so deeply infected as the others; nevertheless, it had to fall back in conformity with the retirement of the centre (Seventh) and the northern (Eleventh) armies. Stanislau was evacuated on July 25; Kolomea—which had been the first nodal point gained the year before in Brussiloff's drive—two days later, and Czernowitz changed hands once more about the end of the month. Galicia was gone; the Bukovina followed.

Yet by this timely retreat, and by a fine grasp of the moral as well as the tactical situation, General Korniloff all but saved both. He insisted on restoring the death penalty, observing, in a telegram to Army Commanders and Government Commissioners, that in his opinion the voluntary retreat of units from their positions was equivalent to treason and treachery; in such cases he ordered commanders to turn their guns against the traitors, and if commanders neglected this duty he should court martial them. General Brussiloff backed him up, and the Provisional Government, to whom a telegram was sent, answered by empowering Korniloff to take what measures he thought requisite. It was followed by a ukase restoring the death penalty

and constituting a new kind of elective court martial. The measures served—for a time. The Russian armies were brought to a standstill on the River Zbrucz, and there they held the Germans.

For a time it seemed as if even better things were in store. The Roumanian army was sound, and attempted an offensive which yielded prisoners and guns. But the Russians, who had once before betrayed the Roumanians by the inaction, or worse, of their bureaucracy, were now to betray them for a second time by the defection of their democrats. The Roumanian forward movement, thanks to the dash of Roumanian soldiers, who were fired with a new spirit, was at first a success. But the Russian soldiers on their flanks refused to fight, and the Roumanians, who were commanded by King Ferdinand and General Tcherbatcheff, were fortunate to extricate themselves from a difficult position with the loss of prisoners and some fifty guns. Russia was now fast splitting up into provinces. Great Russia was separated from Little Russia, or the Ukraine (Borderland), and unhappily Roumania was the first of Russia's allies to suffer. She had many successors. E. S. G.

CHAPTER XII

THE BATTLE OF MESSINES

(June, 1917)

Mining Operations under the Ridge—Railways and Roads, Water Supply and Transport—Commanding Position of Messines Ridge—German Defences—Difficulties of Assault—Preliminary Aerial Offensive—The Great Explosion—Barrage and Assault—Order of Attacking Divisions—Irish Division and Wytschaete—Death of Major W. K. Redmond—New Zealanders and Messines Village—Australians at the Douve Stream—Londoners and the White Château—The 41st Division and the Damstrasse—Western Counties and Manchesters—Hill 60—Welsh at the Nag's Head—Bois l'Enfer Positions and the 25th Division—Advance of the Guns—Second Phase of the Attack—Capture of the Oosttaverne Line—Consolidation and Results.

NO operation of the war was more deliberate than that which led to the occupation of the Messines Ridge by General Sir Herbert Plumer's Army, which opened the summer campaign of 1917 on the Flanders front as a preliminary to Sir Douglas Haig's forthcoming offensive at Ypres. The preparations for the Second British Army's attack had been built up with the science and forethought that are usually associated not with battles but with the construction of a work of engineering, such as a giant dam or a railway. The comparison with an underground railway would be near the mark, for much of the preliminary spade work at Messines was tunnelling. It was known to all, Germans as well as British, that mining and tunnelling operations were locally interdicted by the water-logged character of the strata about Messines. But the dip of the strata had been carefully considered by a professor of geology, whose name has not yet been published, though it has been long known to geologists all over the world, and who determined that the British could

find a way to mine the ridge, and indicated the direction which the tunnels should take. These tunnels were begun as early as the autumn of 1915; and they were never rightly countermined by the Germans, though their mining efforts were continuous. The result was the construction of a system of mines under the ridge, which remains one of the most efficient surprises of the war.

Sir Douglas Haig's dispatch (Jan. 8, 1918) describes with some elaboration the progress of what he calls this deep mining offensive. In all, twenty-four mines were constructed, four of which were outside the front that was ultimately chosen, and were thus not used. Another mine was in fact destroyed by a countermine. But many of them were actually ready twelve months before the electric current exploded them on the morning of the battle; and their existence was as threatening to their owners as a Mills's bomb of which the pin might slip. The enemy had a system also, and had some idea of what was in store for him. At Hill 60 a continuous underground struggle between

the British and German tunnellers took place for ten months before the day, and only by an anxious skill, a persistence that never wearied, and a courage that never failed, were the Hill 60 mines saved from the German countermines. It was known in May and June that the Germans were driving a gallery which would ultimately lead into ours. The mining engineers at the listening microphones decided that it would just fail to reach our gallery in time. It did fail. The work proceeded. So also at the "Bluff", by the Ypres-Comines Canal, this underground struggle was incessant. Between January 16 and June 7, 1917, we blew in the enemy's galleries seventeen times, and they blew in ours ten times. The Germans were evidently growing very uneasy after February, and began blowing *camouflets* heavily in order to get at our operations. The British gallery, or tunnel, to the Spanbroekmolen mine, was cut by one of these efforts, and our way to the mine cut off. It was restored only a day before the attack. The restoration proved worth while, for the Spanbroekmolen mine blew a crater 140 yards wide—let us say, something of the same size as London's Trafalgar Square. Altogether 5 miles of gallery were driven in making these mines, and a million pounds of explosive was used when they went up. They went up without a hitch—except for the Germans, who went up with them.

There were other preparations to which it was not possible to lend the element of surprise. The points from which the attack was to be loosed had

to be fed with a railway system; and this had to be pushed forward at great speed, as indeed it was, because any such system was clearly visible to the enemy, who would be able to impede its progress. There was an analogous construction of roads; and as the time approached for the attack this form of construction took on a futurist aspect, because the Army Commanders were confident enough in the success of their first assault to forecast the necessity of being able to continue erecting roads over the ground in the shell zone which had been broken and pitted by shell-fire. Forward dumps of material were accumulated for this purpose.

A special problem arose in respect of the water supply. Later in the year the supply of superfluous water was unhappily of an abundance which greatly embarrassed the British plans; but for the Messines operations it was as necessary to supply water for troops who were expected to push forward and hold devastated trenches against counter-attack, as it was necessary to furnish ammunition. Associated with this provision were others which were made for the transport of rations, stores, and equipment by pack animals and carrying parties. Such arrangements are only one aspect of the minutiae, seen and unseen, which have to be devised with every exactness of time, place, and direction before the human units of a great attack can be sent forward. The soldiers themselves, from private to sergeant, from company leader to regimental commander, must all be prepared, trained, timed, with similar exactitude; and their suc-

cess will depend on the completeness of the correspondence between their movements and those of the other units, artillery, mining parties, pioneers, and machine-gun sections, which are their supports or dependents.

The elaboration of preparation in the Messines operations was a condition of the surroundings. All the low marshy country on the British side of the Messines Ridge was under the eye of the enemy. Not a road or a light railway could be pushed forward unperceived. Yet in the Flanders plain, in such an inhospitable summer as that of 1917 proved, wheeled traffic can never pass except over a made road, and foot traffic can rarely leave with safety the granite roads for the fields seamed with ditches.

Messines Ridge has been described as the German point of concentration against Calais. It had been held by the Germans since December, 1914, and though the British had refused to yield the Ypres salient which it commanded, yet for two and a half years it had given the enemy observation points which enabled him to inflict a constant drain of loss by artillery fire on the British lines. How complete was the observation became realized only when the battle had been won, and when, standing in Wytschaete Wood and the Mound of St. Eloi, the victors could look back on the ground rising up to Messines and see every detail of their old territory laid out like a relief map. "It's a wonder", an officer is reported to have remarked to a war correspondent, "that they allowed us to live at all!" The enemy could see every movement of the Bri-

tish, unless they moved underground, or under the cover of Kemmel Hill and its leafy lanes, or behind the *camouflage* screens of the roadways. They could, and did, shell with relentless accuracy every village, every farm, every cross road, every billet and barn, and every working party that their observation officers espied and notified to their gunners.

But Messines Ridge was more to the enemy than an observation post: it was a fortress. It is in strictness not a ridge, but a group of hills, of which Messines and Wytschaete are the key points, and it lies midway between Armentières and Ypres. It is the eastern end of the abrupt high mounds which divide the valleys of the Yser and the Lys from one another, and links that range with the swell of rising ground that goes north-eastwards to Passchendaele, and is cut by the Ypres-Menin road. The village of Messines, on a southern spur of the group, commands the valley of the Lys. North-west of it lies Wytschaete, which is the highest point, though its elevation is but 260 feet. Wytschaete commands Ypres, and all the old British positions in the Ypres salient.

The German first-line trenches defined the western foot of the ridge, from the Lys to the Menin road, and then turned north-west past Hooze and Wicltje, by the Pilkem ridge to the Yser Canal at Boesinghe. Behind these trenches the second-line system curved along the ridge from Messines to Wytschaete. Other defences lay like chords across the arc, the first north to south, and known from its

proximity to the village of Oosttaverne as the Oosttaverne line. The second chord was roughly parallel to this, a mile farther to the east, and was called the Warneton line. It crossed the Lys at Warneton. For two years the Germans, in anticipation of our possible offensive, had developed the natural defences of the position with their unflagging industry and skill. The villages, the woods, the farms, the hamlets, were bristling with defensive ingenuities. The German High Command knew the value of the position, and spared no means to convey it to their soldiers, and to impress on these the necessity of holding it.

On a map the ridge can be seen to bulge out on the Flanders plain between Ploegsteert and Zillebeke in a narrow arc; and the front-line German system was some 9 miles long. Behind it the second-line system was 6 miles in length, and the trench system between the two lines resembled the fine mesh of a net. The element of strength in the German position was that the whole of the ridge had to be taken at a blow, the first chord of the arc and the second chord as well; and there were 4000 yards of fortified country between them. The Germans may have thought that while an artillery preparation could batter the first chord, the second chord would remain intact as a base for a counter-attack. The British calculated on moving up artillery while the first line was being secured by the first onrush of infantry, and using it to batter the second chord. Both sides, in short, stripped for the fray; the British by training their assaulting troops over sections of ground

which had been constructed in the rear of their lines to resemble the obstacles which would be encountered; the Germans by amplifying their defences and counter measures, and by providing or promising to provide reinforcements of reserves to come to the aid of their first-line troops should these lines be pierced. The preparations and counter-preparations on both sides were as deliberate and almost as overt as those which in peace time preceded the struggles of the Olympic games. The actual front selected for attack was from a point opposite St. Yves to Mount Sorrel.

For a week before the attack the British guns battered the German lines, a method of preparation which was modified in some subsequent offensives by concentrating a shorter but more vehement fire on the enemy. This artillery fire went on night and day, growing in violence towards the morning of the attack. The flying service began to clear the sky of the enemy, and their record of forty-four German machines in five days, though it was dwarfed by subsequent exploits of the air forces in 1918, was rightly regarded in 1917 as a remarkable feat. At any rate it sufficed, and the necessary temporary command of the air was obtained by the British airmen. Tanks were brought up in readiness. The comparatively clear skies which favoured the air service in their work on the days previous to the battle yielded to a thick summer fog on the eve of June 7; but the night and the dawn were clear, with a lingering moon.

The guns had been increasing their

fire as the moment for the attack crept closer; but the real signal for it seemed to be the explosion of the great system of mines. Messines stands in danger of being remembered by its mine-explosion, of which the sound was said to have reverberated so as to be heard in England, and many descriptions were penned of it, as was perhaps natural, since it was a thing that every correspondent could not help but see and hear.

"Out of the dark ridges of Messines and Wytschaete and that ill-famed Hill 60, for which many of our best have died," wrote Mr. Philip Gibbs,¹ "there gushed out and up enormous volumes of scarlet flame from the exploding mines of earth and smoke. Truly the earth quaked. A New Zealand boy who came back wounded spoke to me about his own sensations. 'I felt like being in an open boat on a rough sea. It rocked up and down this way and that.'"

Reuter's correspondent, describing the crash of the mines no less impressively, added that the villages of Messines and Wytschaete vanished, and that from Hill 60 to Ploegsteert the ground looked like the dusty Long Valley of Aldershot. The divisions went forward on top of the explosion: the barrage of the guns led them forward. In one instant the whole horizon blazed into a flickering flame with the flash of the guns. Instead of the tall columns of smoke the whole belt of the ridge to the east was hidden by a rising cloud from the smoke barrages, which increased the volume of fumes sent up by the shells and the mines. While the riot and clamour were at their height the flush of dawn

crept rosy red in the sky above Ypres, the sun itself hidden behind the bank of smoke; and with the dawn the bird chorus of morning blackbird and thrush and skylark came to life, the shrill music strangely interpolated between the crashes of the artillery.

The order of the attacking divisions was, from north to south: The 23rd Division, 47th Division (London), 41st Division, 19th Division, 16th Division (Irish), 36th Division (Ulster), 25th Division (New Zealanders and Australians). The "zero hour" of attack was 3.10 a.m. The German first-line trenches had collapsed under the combined blast of the mines and the high-explosive shells of our batteries; and where there had been trenches were now craters, so that it was not possible to traverse the ground without skirting one of them. One of the craters at a point called "Peckham", where a mine had exploded, was 70 feet deep and 300 feet across. A spectator who saw it immediately afterwards described it as thinly sprinkled with torn clothing—that was all that was left of a company of the 4th German Grenadier Regiment which had been guarding its site. It was over this broken ground that our men poured, meeting little resistance from the paralysed defenders; and the attacking brigades, British, Irish, New Zealand, and Australian, pressed on up the slopes of the ridge to the assault of the crest line.

It was a great day for all the British regiments, but the honour and the burden of position gave the taking of the two points of Wytschaete and of Messines to Irish brigades and to

¹ *From Britain to the Frontiers* (Homenage).
Vol. VII.

New Zealanders. Men from the Western Counties of England cleared the Grand Bois; other English county regiments forced their way into the half-obliterated trench system following the road that ran from Wytschaete to the Ypres-Comines Canal, and known as the Damstrasse; the London regiments won their honours at the strong redoubt of the White Château.

The Irish—Dublin men and Ulstermen, Munster lads and Royal Irish—went forward side by side. They were hard on the heels of the barrage, and the fumes of the mine explosion blew back in their faces. Pressing on through Petit-Bois Wood, they reached Wytschaete Wood. Wyschaete Wood, though its trees were no more than stumps, would have been a difficult obstacle in ordinary circumstances. The Irish went through it like a prairie fire. A small body of Germans held out in the middle of the wood; a German machine-gun swept the assaulters with its fire; but the machine-gun company and the other handful of Germans were destroyed.

A redoubt between the wood and Wytschaete village offered a more prolonged resistance. It was taken by an officer leading a party of South of Ireland men armed only with rifles; and a costly delay was thus prevented. Yet not without cost, for the officer was killed. It was in this great movement of United Ireland on to Wytschaete that Major W. K. Redmond, M.P., the brother of John Redmond, the Irish leader, fell, giving his blood for the consecration of the cause so dear to his heart, that cause of liberty

which transcends all differences of politics, and rises even above patriotism in the service of mankind. Wytschaete village, round which the Irish closed, was a fortress position, but its garrison had been demoralized by the shell-fire which had swept church and château and hospice level with the ground, and



Major W. K. Redmond, M.P., killed in action on
June 7, 1917
(From a photograph by Lafayette)

had seamed the earth above the refuge tunnels. Irish Nationalists, keeping in line with the Ulstermen, advanced through Spanbroekmolen, through Hell Wood, to the top of the ridge, and both Divisions had a remarkable similarity of experience. The South and West Country Irishmen of Dublin and Munster took 1000 prisoners. So did the Ulstermen. In front of the Dublin men a whole company of Germans was killed in the mine explosion:

a like fate overtook another German company in front of the Ulstermen.

The New Zealanders had as formidable a part of the line as any to drive through in order to reach their goal of Messines village, and the German guns were apparently quicker in getting to work, or less helpless than on some sectors of the defences, so that the attackers had to go through some heavy shelling. In Messines itself the German infantry put up some fighting worthy of their best reputation, in fortified posts near the site of the Church and in the old Grand Place. They had to be routed out with Mills bombs and hand-to-hand fighting. Nevertheless the New Zealanders held Messines village firmly in their hands by the hour appointed on the time schedule of 7 o'clock in the morning, and then, flinging off their tunics, dug as hard as they had fought, so that two deep trenches were laid out in record time as a provision against counter-attack.

On the right of the New Zealanders, and forming the extreme pivot of the line, were the Australians. They had the difficult task, of which they made light, of getting across the little Douve stream (which they did by throwing duckboards across it under a nasty shell-fire), and thence on to the German support line under machine-gun fire. The Germans had a nest of machine-guns ensconced in the ruins of Grey Farm. A young Australian officer dealt with Grey Farm by crawling through a hedge with a small party of adventurers, and by setting fire to the ruin so that it should give no more trouble. Farther to the north there

were scattered bodies of German active as well as passive resisters, and one such party held a strong point on the Messines road behind a belt of wire that had miraculously survived. The Australians were disgustingly pulled up in front of this obstacle, and hesitation, with shells dropping freely and machine-gun fire spraying on the attackers, was a costly necessity. A young tank officer, whose machine had caught up the Australians (the attack in many sectors had been so rapid that the tanks never came into action at all in the first push), volunteered to deal with this obstacle. "I guess old Rattle-belly can roll that down," he remarked, and the tank justified his confidence by laying flat the hedge of wire. The Australians walked in its tracks and took the post. Another tank lent its machine-guns to Australians at a critical moment; and together tanks and Antipodeans did their work here very neatly and completely.

The exploit which stands to the credit of the London men was marked by the name of the White Château. The problem set to the Division was to go through Battle Wood, a section of the Ypres-Comines Canal, and the White Château, which was just a German fort, for its summered lawns and orangery had long ago gone the way of its graceful architecture. But its lake remained, and had been connected by a small stream with the canal. The Germans had made handy defensive positions along this stream, and had also raised two strong and loopholed banks north of the canal. They did not surrender some of these

holdings without the inducement of bombs. A pocket of sixty Germans surrendered at one of the points.

On the right of the London troops were English county troops of the 41st Division, the 60th Rifles (King's Royal Rifles), West Kents, and others. They had been placed for the assault in the salient opposite a famous heap of earth known as the Mound. The Mound went up in the great mine explosion, and the men's cheering at the sight could be heard through the shell barrage which followed. Then the waves of riflemen and West Kents went forward over and by the craters to the street of shell-resisting concrete blocks, six feet thick, which the Germans called the Damstrasse. The position had given great anxiety to the staff, who knew its strength, but as it happened the shell-fire of our batteries had sufficed, and many of the blockhouses of the Damstrasse had been blown in. Its garrison was cowed into surrendering by the hundred.

The King's Royal Rifles pressed forward into the chaos of country beyond, and were first held up by the usual bunch of Germans, who, distinct from those who quickly surrendered, were determined to hold on while they had a belt of ammunition for their machine-guns. The Rifles picked them off, themselves taking what shelter they could, and as the fire slackened rushed what was left of the garrison of the ruins. Fresh waves of men came up and poured into Ravine Wood, which was the West Kents' task and prize. A desperate fight took place between the West Kents and some brave Ger-

mans of the 55th Division, who attempted a counter-attack. It was not often that bayonets crossed in these battles, but this was one of the occasions. There was more killing than taking of prisoners, but between the Mound and Ravine Wood 800 Germans surrendered.

Farther to the left men from the Western Counties of England had cleared the Grand Bois, and both the Manchesters and the Welsh went forward with great dash. At and around Hill 60 the area had been a warren of tunnels and defensive positions which theoretically were impregnable. The mines had disposed of their impregnability by moving them bodily. The northerners were among them, and were taking dazed German prisoners almost before the barrage lifted. The position was taken, and 540 prisoners with it in less than an hour. The whole division had 70 less casualties than the prisoners taken.

The point where the Welshmen went over was known as the "Nag's Head", owing to the shape of the German front line there, at Hollandsche-schuur Farm before the Grand Bois, north-west of Wytshaete. The Welshmen were so keen that debris from the mine fell on their leading files. They met with little resistance about the craters, though some were gassed by the fumes; but the German trenches in front of the Grand Bois were very strongly held. More were killed than taken prisoners here; and the wood itself was bitterly disputed. There is a picturesque story of a Welsh Lewis gunner here who charged a machine-gun post, firing his Lewis

gun from the hip and killing all the eight German gunners. The first rush paused east of the wood, while another wave came up behind, including many Cardiff men, and not a few who had played football for Cardiff's historic teams. A formidable obstacle which they took was "Obvious Trench"; with it they captured twelve machine-guns and two trench mortars; and the last item in their bag was a farm building known as North House.

Between Wytschaete and Messines was the Bois l'Enfer. North of it was the German redoubt of concrete and barbed wire, which was descriptively named l'Enfer, and south of it was a labyrinth of trenches and dug-outs which the men knew as Hell Farm. These places became the victory-badges of the 25th Division, including Cheshires, Irish Rifles, Lancashire Fusiliers, North Lincs, and Worcesters. These had advanced almost without opposition and without a check from Wulverghem; but machine-gun fire from Hell Wood on their left, and Hell Farm in front, held them up on the left. The Cheshires stopped the fire from the wood and took fourteen machine-guns from the Farm. Meanwhile the main body, Lancashires, Worcesters, and Irish, were pulled up short by October Trench, where the wire had not been cut. *But the men went through the wire.* It was a feat that seemed incredible; but they did it, and rushed the support trench immediately afterwards. Not without bitter fighting, for this was one of the deadliest isolated episodes of the day. Three hundred

Germans were killed behind and about the wire. The Cheshires' work, not yet ended, included Despagne Farm. They were all but damaged by their own artillery, through going too far.

Messines had been captured at 7 a.m., White Château reduced early in the morning; the two Irish Divisions had fought their way side by side through Wytschaete by midday; and the troops had then begun to move down the eastern slopes of the ridge, the divisions in the middle of the attack which had farthest to go drawing level gradually with those on the flanks. The guns had begun to move forward, in order to help in beating down resistance at those strong points—the machine-gun nests and redoubts in the numerous woods and coppices, and the fortified farm-houses where the best German fighters held out. The advance of the guns half-way through the battle was in itself a historic incident; for it implied the abandonment of the old gun positions which had been held during the two and a half years of stationary warfare in the salient. The gun horses had been waiting by the batteries. The guns were limbered up; the drivers shouted to their teams, and at a gallop the field artillery went by, past old screens, out of camouflaged hiding-places, and through the lines of the infantry, opened out to let them pass. As the guns went forward up the slopes there rose a great cheer from the waiting infantrymen, and the cheer followed the track of the guns till they reached the crest, and unlimbered again for the second phase of fighting down the slopes. The position attained by



British Official Photograph

"The End of a Perfect Day". in Wytschaete after its capture by the Irish Divisions on June 7, 1917

three o'clock in the afternoon can be defined as approximately parallel to the Oosttaverne line, and from 400 to 800 yards to the west of it.

The second phase of the attack began with little loss of time. At a quarter to four Oosttaverne village had been captured; and a quarter of an hour afterwards the troops which shared the work at the Bois l'Enfer pierced the Oosttaverne line east of the village, taking two batteries of German field guns. Their success was followed up. Other English battalions broke through the German defences of the Oosttaverne line farther north, and the whole of the chord position began to shrivel and snap. By evening the Oosttaverne line was

firmly in British hands; the prisoners were coming in fast, and our guns, with an easy target, and little bothered by the enemy's counter-battery work, had run up a heavy bill of German casualties.

During the night our men dug furiously, while the tanks, now finding a new function, acted as patrols in front of the Oosttaverne line. The German counter-attacks were expected to be heavy; the first was, in fact, repelled in the early morning of the 8th June without difficulty; and the more concerted German effort at seven o'clock of the same evening shared the same fate of repulse, though it was made after an intense bombardment all along the new front which

we had gained. Consolidation of the ground, and the establishment of posts in front of it, were continued for the next few days, during which the Australians added La Potterie Farm, east of Messines, to the bag, and other troops occupied the hamlet of Gapaard. Our positions now began to outflank those of the enemy between the Lys River and St. Yves, and the Germans consequently began methodically to evacuate them. By the night

of June 14 we held the whole of the old German front and support lines north of the Lys; and the line was advanced so as to lie evenly between the River Warnave to Klein Zillebeke. The total captures of the operation, as reported by General Headquarters on June 13, were 7342 prisoners, including 145 officers, 47 guns, 242 machine-guns, and 60 trench mortars.

E. S. G.



Belgian Official Photograph

Recaptured for Belgium by the Second British Army. General Faumer restoring Witschacte's bell to King Albert after the victory of June 7, 1917

CHAPTER XIII

WIDENING THE YPRES SALIENT

(July–August, 1917)

Our Seaward Flank in Flanders—The Lombartzyde Affair—Canadian Pressure round Lens—The Royal Visit to the Front—Position of the Ypres Salient in July, 1917—Sir Douglas Haig's Plans—Opening the Grand Offensive on July 31—The Welshmen and the "Berlin Cockchafer"—Victorious Scottish Advance—English Troops capture St. Julien—Stubborn Fighting in Centre—Rain's Heavy Handicap—Success of Second Army's Attack—Brilliant French Advance—Plans for continuing Attack wrecked by Weather—Critical Moments in Counter-attacks—The Struggle for Westhoek and Glencorse Wood—Canadians Capture Hill 70—Sir Douglas Haig's Second Assault at Ypres—"Pill-boxes" and their Part in the Enemy's New Defensive Policy—Ireland's Splendid Failure on August 16—Capture of Langemarck by English Troops—Londoners' Heroic Struggle against Odds—General Anthoine's Continued Success—Sir Douglas Haig revises his Methods—The Wettest August known for Years.

MESSINES was one of the most brilliant victories in the annals of the British army, but it was a minor affair compared with our forthcoming main offensive east and north of Ypres, to which, indeed, it was merely a preliminary. Something has already been said of Sir Douglas Haig's hopes and plans as he turned his eyes towards the coast, and directed all his energies against that part of the enemy's line which came nearest to the shores of Britain. Another preliminary to the approaching battle was the relief by British troops of the French battalions holding the coast sector from St. Georges to the sea, where our naval forces were held in readiness to play their part in the campaign. Alarmed by the loss of the Messines Wytschaete ridge, and the appearance of our troops on the sand dunes by the sea, the Germans determined to launch a small counter-offensive with the object of putting an unexpected spoke in our wheel in that direction. The spot chosen for this was our seaward-rest-

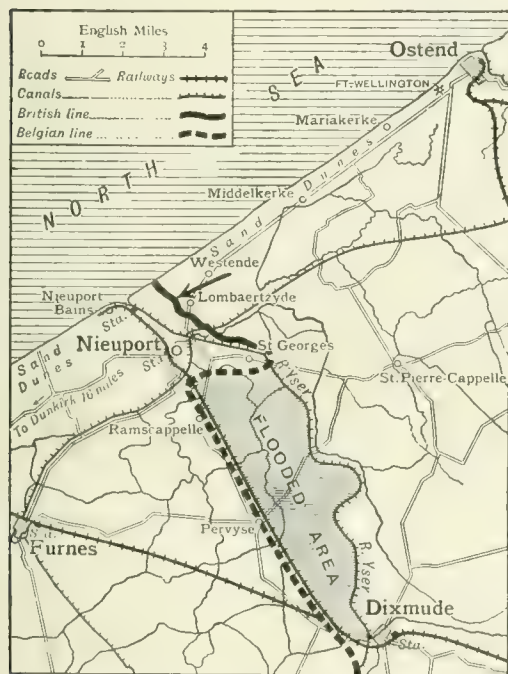
ing flank on the narrow, sandy strip of polder and dune, forming part of the line which we had just taken over from the French, lying on the right bank of the canalized Yser between the Passchendaele Canal, south of Lombartzyde, and the coast.

It had been a welcome change to our men, at first, to find themselves again within reach of the sea, after months, and in some cases years, of hideous trench warfare inland. But there was little cause for congratulation, when, early on the morning of July 10, the enemy began his local offensive with a barrage which not only flattened our sand defences, and the support line on the other side of the Yser, but one after another of the pontoon bridges behind them. All day long the bombardment continued, with a methodical precision which warned the survivors of the King's Royal Rifles and Northamptonshires, who were holding these churned-up sands, that as soon as it ended the German Marines known to be holding the enemy lines would attack in force.

They were completely isolated and without hope of reinforcements; and yet, when the avalanche of shells suddenly ceased at 6.30 p.m., and the Marines were seen advancing in three heavy waves—their flanks securely protected on the one hand by the sea and on the other by the inundations—

are told of the Northamptons, who were on the Riflemen's right. It was a wounded sergeant of the Northamptons, according to the same correspondent, who saw the last of the struggle and was able to swim back:

"He saw a little group of his own officers, not more than six of them, surrounded by Marine bombers, fighting to the end with their revolvers. The picture of these six boys out there in the sand with their dead lying around them, refusing to yield and fighting on to a certain death, is one of the memories of this war that should not be allowed to die. Over the Yser Canal men were trying to swim—men dripping with blood and too weak to swim, and men who could not swim. Some gallant fellow on the Nieuport side—there is an idea that it was a Lancashire man—swam across with a rope under heavy fire, and fixed it so that men could drag themselves across."



Map showing the British and Belgian Line between Dixmude and the Sea at the end of June, 1917, and the scene of the German Attack at Lombartzyde ten days later.

they put up a fight which will always live in the annals of both regiments. Sir Douglas Haig himself records that they were overwhelmed only "after an obstinate and most gallant resistance". Two platoons of Riflemen, adds Mr. Philip Gibbs, fought to the last man, refusing to surrender, while one little group of five lay behind a sand-bank and fired with bombs and rifles until they were destroyed. Similar stories

Altogether some seventy men and four officers succeeded in swimming to our lines across the Yser, though some of them did not get back until the following night. It was only on the northern half of the point attacked that the enemy achieved his object. On the southern half, opposite Lombartzyde, our positions covering Nieuport were deeper, and here, where Glasgow men held the bridge-head, communication across the Yser was still possible; so that though the Germans succeeded in breaking into our lines at the first onrush they were promptly ejected by our counter-attack. Germany, eager to make the most of a comparatively small achievement after her heavy defeat at Messines, hailed this exploit on the dunes with extravagant enthusiasm; but,

though it had certainly made her defences in this sector more secure, it was far from being the "great and magnificent success" which the enemy claimed for it. And no serious attempt was made to push the slight advantage further. For the rest the affair was only another instance of the vital importance of artillery superiority at the point of attack, and the value of effective aircraft co-operation, which in this case had been impossible owing to the mist and gale which had prevailed during the three preceding days. The guns of the fleet were also unable owing to the weather conditions—a strong on-shore wind blowing at the time—to play their part in the operations.

At this period preparations were far advanced for the great Allied offensive east and north of Ypres, but several weeks still remained before the fateful zero hour was finally decided on. In the meanwhile, continuing Sir Douglas Haig's policy of forcing the enemy to guard himself on other fronts, a series of successful minor operations took place elsewhere, chiefly in the nature of reducing the German defences round the long-threatened mining town of Lens. Substantial progress had been made in this direction during May and June by the Canadian troops, who carried La Coulotte, south-west of Lens, on June 26, and reached the outskirts of Avion two days later.

On June 24 North Midland troops had still further improved matters by capturing an important position on the slopes of a hill south-west of Lens, forcing the enemy to make a consider-

able withdrawal on both sides of the river. These successes were the prelude to a double-attack on the evening of June 28, delivered on the one hand by the Canadians and North Midland troops on a front of $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles astride the Souchez, and on the other by English county troops on a front of 2000 yards opposite Oppy, thus starting the flames again on the old battlefield of Arras. Elaborate demonstrations were made by General Horne at the same time on the whole of the First Army front, accompanied by discharges of gas, smoke, and thermit, together with a mock raid south-east of Loos, and all the other trickery of modern warfare, the idea being to give the enemy the impression that he was being attacked on the whole 12-mile front from Gavrelle to Hulluch. The German *communiqué* of the following day showed that Prince Rupprecht was thoroughly deceived by all this *camouflage*, the feint attacks being claimed as fierce assaults, bloodily repulsed. Our successes in the real attacks were, as usual, glossed over; but Sir Douglas Haig makes it clear in his dispatches that all our objectives were gained, including the hamlet of Eleu dit Leauvette, between Lens and La Coulotte, and the southern half of Avion, with a number of prisoners and twelve machine-guns. In this sector, where the retreating foe helped to bar the further progress of our troops by flooding the marsh between Avion and Lens, we had advanced a good mile in depth. In the sector to the south, where the second serious assault was delivered, other county troops, including the Royal

Warwicks, who greatly distinguished themselves, carried their objectives in the infernal regions of Oppy Wood in the face of a tremendous barrage from the enemy's guns, and the most furious resistance on the part of the defending Bavarians. They not only captured the enemy trenches, but took nearly 250 prisoners in the process. Similar pressure and a constant menace were maintained throughout the ensuing weeks and months. There was a big raid in gas masks by Canadian troops in the small hours of July 23, for instance, to the south-east of Avion, in which a division of German reinforcements, newly arrived from the Russian front, was badly cut up. Thus, though the fires of battle on the grand scale died down in the southern zone and other parts of the British front, the Germans were kept on tenter-hooks lest the British should take advantage of any momentary weakness there, and forced to hold their positions in strength while the heaviest blows were raining on their troops in the north.

Here, in the middle of July, 1917, notwithstanding the little set-back at Lombartzyde, the Allies' prospects looked fairer than for many months past. Not only were Italy and France holding their recent gains, but Russia had raised new hopes by General Brussiloff's dramatic, but, alas! short-lived, triumph in Galicia. King George, too, had just paid another visit to the seat of war, this time accompanied by the Queen, and before returning to London on the 14th had issued the following stirring Order to his troops:—

"On the conclusion of my fourth visit to the British Armies in the Field, I leave you with feelings of admiration and gratitude for past achievements and of confidence in future efforts. On all sides I have witnessed the scenes of your triumphs. The battle-fields of the Somme, the Ancre, Arras, Vimy, and Messines have shown me what great results can be attained by the courage and devotion of all arms and services under efficient commanders and staffs. Nor do I forget the valuable work done by the various departments behind the fighting line, including those who direct and man the highly developed system of railways and other means of communication. Your comrades, too—the men and women of the industrial army at home—have claims on your remembrance for their untiring service in helping you to meet the enemy on terms which are not merely equal, but daily improving.

"It was a great pleasure to the Queen to accompany me, and to become personally acquainted with the excellent arrangements for the care of the sick and wounded, whose welfare is ever close to her heart. For the past three years the Armies of the Empire and workers in the homelands behind them have risen superior to every difficulty and every trial. The splendid successes already gained, in concert with our gallant Allies, have advanced us well on the way towards the completion of the task we undertook.

"There are doubtless fierce struggles still to come, and heavy strains on our endurance to be borne. But be the road before us long or short, the spirit and pluck which have brought you so far will never fail, and, under God's guidance, the final and complete victory of our just cause is assured.

"General Headquarters, British Armies in France, July 14, 1917."

July 14 was France's Day, and the King had prolonged his stay in order to spend it on French soil, commemorating the occasion, among other ways, by visiting the wounded in one of our



Walter F. of the Green Corns. He made his first big stand at Ypres and was killed by a bullet in the back of the head after the battle of June 30, 1917.

Allies' hospitals. Four days previously, with the Queen, His Majesty had received President Poincaré, a cordial meeting also taking place with the King and Queen of the Belgians. It was on this occasion that King George conferred upon the Queen of the Belgians the Order of the Royal Red Cross for her noble services among the wounded. On the 12th, at a certain town not far behind the lines, the King had met the new French Generalissimo, General Pétain, personally conferring upon him the order of the G.C.B. Other French officers were honoured at the same investiture, including General Franchet d'Esperey, who received the G.C.M.G. Among the British officers knighted that day were the two brothers, Lieutenant-General Fanshawe and Major-General Fanshawe, as well as General Currie—the newly-appointed commanding officer of the Canadians—all of whom received the K.C.B. To the honours already won by Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig was added, on the King's return to England, that of a Knighthood of the Order of the Thistle.

During his visit His Majesty was also able to greet the chief officers of Britain's oldest Allies, the Portuguese, and inspect a representative body of their troops in one of the old market squares behind the lines. Though they had long since played a distant part in the war in their share in the East African campaign, the Portuguese contingent had only lately arrived on the actual fighting front in France. The troops were sent, in the words of Senhor Almeida, when

Prime Minister, "to demonstrate the close collaboration of our country with her old Ally, Great Britain, and with other nations also fighting for right and justice". Senhor Almeida added:—

"If it has already been said and written that the future of Portugal is in Africa, this effort is imparting energy to our action as a colonial country, but the co-operation of the Portuguese army on the European battle-fields will assure the existence of Portugal as an autonomous nation. The future of Portugal will be decided in the trenches in Europe."

Here, in due course, after finishing their training behind the lines, the Portuguese troops took their place in the Allied line, and had had their share of raids and obstinate local fighting when King George paid his fourth visit to the front. Having heard of their experiences at first hand, His Majesty thanked them for their good service to the common cause, expressed his appreciation of the soldierly bearing of the men, and wished them good luck.

In the concluding stage of his ten days' tour the King, who had already explored the newly-won Vimy and Messines Ridges, revisited the Somme battle-field, witnessing for himself the vindictive havoc caused by the Germans before they gave up Péronne and the other battered ruins of the recently-evacuated area. The Queen, who devoted most of her time to the hospitals and other activities for alleviating the suffering caused by the war, also spent a day not only on part of the Somme battle-field, but also, with the Prince of Wales, on the ancient

field of Crécy. Here, in his mother's presence, the Prince stood on the exact traditional spot where the Black Prince, nearly 600 years before, adopted the feathered crest and motto which had been worn by the slain King John of Bohemia. It was an intimate, informal incident, passed almost unnoticed in the published records of the

siege and fall of Calais in 1347. On the evening of France's Day of 1917 the Queen was rejoined by King George at the appointed place of departure and returned to England.

By this time the dispositions on both sides were nearly complete for the new battle of Flanders. The Fifth Army, under General Gough,



The Queen's Visit to France, July, 1917: Her Majesty inspecting convalescent troops

day, but from the historical point of view it was one of the most interesting episodes in a tour crowded with memories of ancient as well as modern battle-fields. Her Majesty's visit itself was memorable as being the first occasion for nearly six centuries on which the Queen of England had accompanied her husband to the seat of war on foreign soil, the last instance being provided by the warlike Queen Philippa, who joined Edward III on most of his campaigns, including the

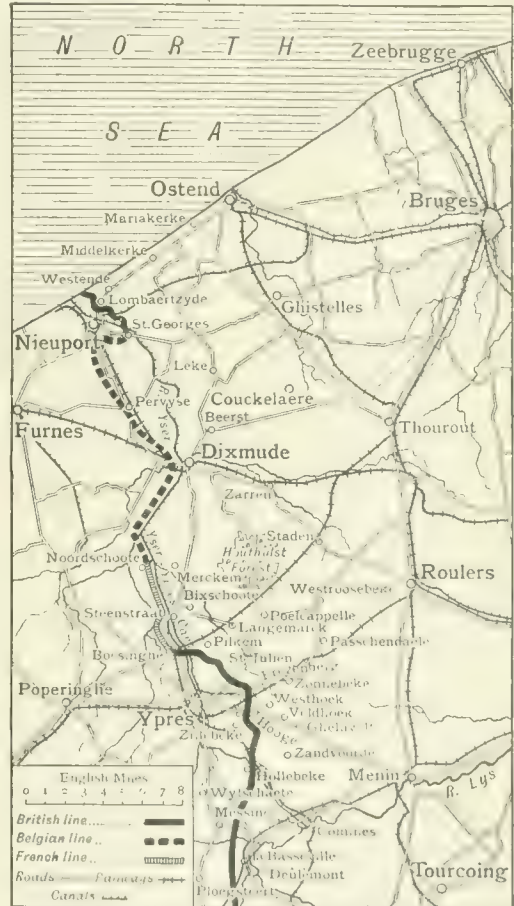
brought up from the Arras-St. Quentin line, had taken over the front on General Plumer's left from Observatory Ridge to Boesinghe as long ago as June 10. On the Fifth Army's left the Belgians, holding the line from Boesinghe to Noordschoote, had been relieved by the newly-arrived First French Army, under General Anthoine, who had been set free for the purpose from the operations at Maronvilliers, where he had handed over the command of the Fourth Army to General

Gouraud, "the lion of the Argonne". While the troops were thus massing for the fray, the necessary development of all the communications behind the vital battle front, the provision of an adequate water supply and of accommodation for the increased numbers of troops, the formation of ammunition dumps, the assembling and registering of guns, and all the other problems inseparable from the mounting of modern battles on any considerable scale, had to be met and overcome under conditions described by the British Commander-in-Chief as of more than ordinary disadvantage.

"On no previous occasion, not excepting the attack on the Messines-Wytschaete Ridge," he writes, "had the whole of the ground from which we had to attack been so completely exposed to the enemy's observation. Even after the enemy had been driven from the Messines-Wytschaete Ridge, he still possessed excellent direct observation over the salient from the east and south-east, as well as from the Pilkem Ridge to the north. Nothing existed at Ypres to correspond with the vast caves and cellars which proved of such value in the days prior to the Arras battle, and the provision of shelter for the troops presented a very serious problem."

The work of the Tunnelling Companies of the Royal Engineers earned special praise in this connection, being carried out under great difficulties, not only from the unreliable nature of the ground, but also from the enemy's artillery, which, as a result of the record explosion at Messines, now paid particular attention to any sign of mining activity on our part. When, however, the initial stages of the battle were definitely started by our own

guns and an unmistakable aerial offensive, our counter-battery work became so effective that the enemy began to withdraw his artillery to places of greater security. On this account, "and also for other reasons", writes



The Seaward Flank of the Allied Line since the Opening of Sir Douglas Haig's Offensive on July 31, 1917

Sir Douglas Haig, the great attack, which had been fixed for July 25, was temporarily held up. It was postponed first for three days—in order to enable our airmen to locate the new German gun positions, and also to allow some of our own artillery to be moved farther

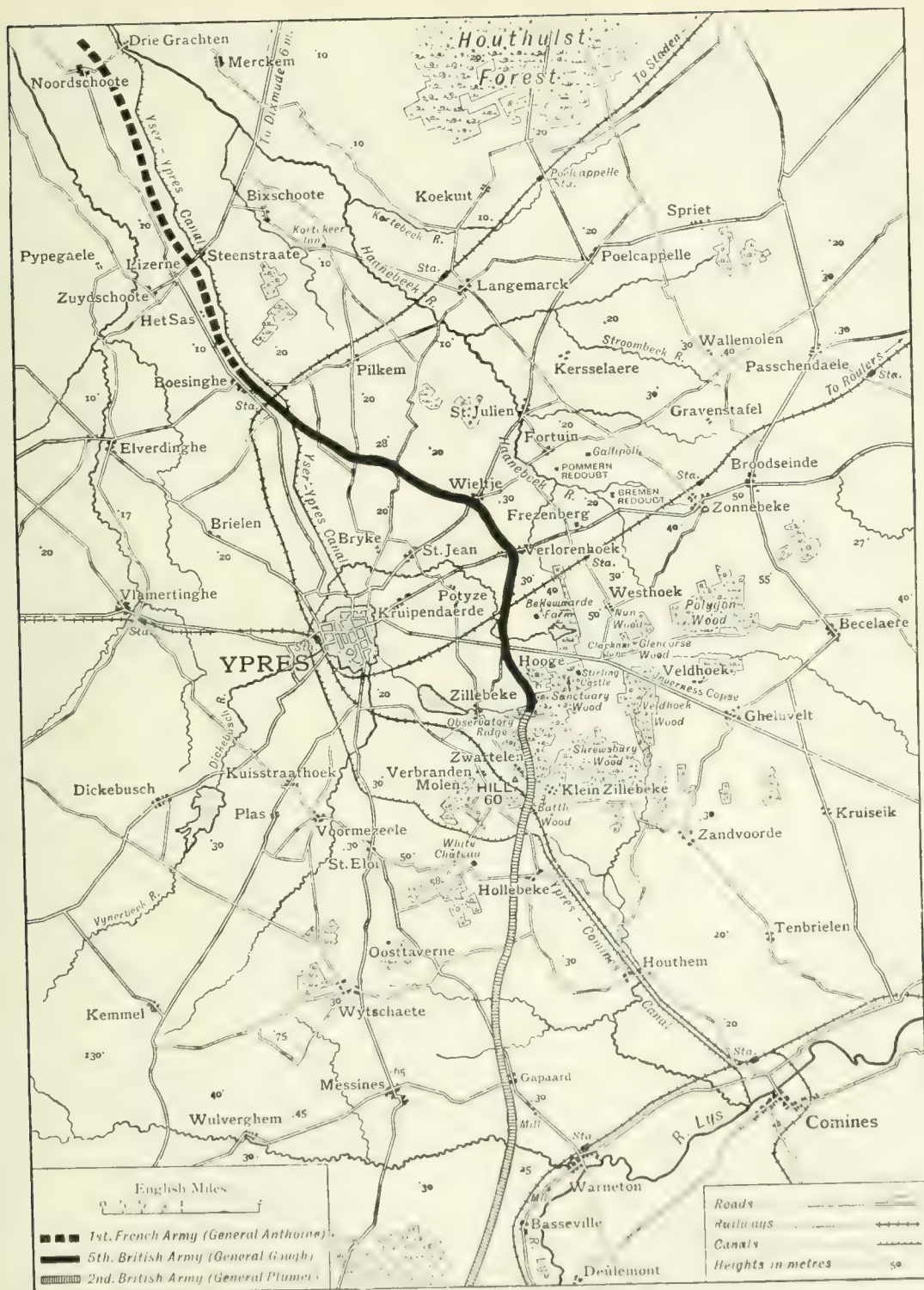
forward—and finally until the 31st, the second delay being due partly to a succession of days of bad visibility, and partly to the difficulties experienced by our Allies in getting their guns into position in their new area.

Meantime the enemy, on his side, knowing full well the meaning of all these stupendous portents, though still in doubt as to the exact points of gravest danger, had responded by bringing up fresh batteries and drafting as many reinforcements as he could spare into the threatened zone; so that by the end of July the Allied and German armies stood facing each other round Ypres in their greatest strength. Some four or five days before the actual launching of the infantry attack the enemy, for some undiscovered reason, withdrew to one of his near lines from his forward defence system on the northern portion of the Fifth Army front. This move was opportunely discovered on the 27th, when the British Guards and French troops, who had been chosen to solder the Allied line together at this vital junction, seized the opportunity to cross the Yser Canal and firmly establish themselves in the enemy's first and support trenches on a front of about 3000 yards east and north of Boesinghe. Regretting their gift too late the Germans tried in vain to eject the new occupants of their abandoned positions. During the night, under a hail of shell and shrapnel, the Allies added to the advantage thus gained by throwing numerous pontoon bridges over the canal, which proved of incalculable value on the opening day of battle. Whether the

withdrawal which made this possible was due to the desire of the enemy's infantry to escape our bombardment, which had now been raging for days and nights "with an intensity", according to the Berlin reports, "never hitherto reached"; or to his fear that the forthcoming attack would be inaugurated by the explosion of a new series of mines on the Messines scale, Sir Douglas Haig was unable to determine; but, whatever the reason, the operation greatly facilitated the Fifth Army's advance on this sector, where the Yser Canal had hitherto presented the most formidable obstacle to any attack.

To the Fifth Army fell the task of delivering the main blow, over a front of about $7\frac{1}{2}$ miles, in this opening phase of the grand offensive, though the total battle-front extended from the Lys River, opposite Deulemont, northwards to beyond Steenstraat, a total distance of over 15 miles. The enemy troops to bear the brunt of the attack were the Fourth German Army of the Bavarian Crown Prince Rupprecht. The task of the Second British Army was to advance a short distance only, covering the right of the Fifth Army, its main object for the moment being to increase the area threatened by the attack, and so force the enemy to distribute the fire of his artillery. "I had other tasks in view for it at a later period," explains Sir Douglas Haig.

First of all, the British Commander-in-Chief wanted more elbow-room, more play for manœuvre, and command of the surrounding ridges which barred the way to the low-lying field



The Ypres Salient before the Battle of July 31, 1917 - map showing the approximate positions of the Franco-British Line

of Flanders beyond. For nearly three years British troops had held a valley of death in the shallow saucer of the Ypres salient, with the German trenches planted in semicircular fashion round its lip. When the enemy stormed down its sloping sides behind his clouds of poisonous gas in the Second Battle of Ypres he had vastly improved his position, though he had failed to capture the town; and he held all the better ground. Although, as Sir Douglas Haig pointed out, he had now been driven from his southern points of vantage on the Messines-Wytschaete Ridge, he still dominated the salient from the east and south-east, as well as from the Pilkem Ridge on the north. Here, as at Hooge, Verlorenhoek, St. Julien, Hollebeke, and other parts of the salient in the forefront of the coming battle, his defences ran through an earthwork labyrinth carved, wherever possible, by practised engineers out of firmer soil than could ever be found in the sodden wilderness of the Ypres area. In their first two lines, however, even the Germans were far worse off in underground refuges than on the battlefields of Arras and the Somme. Though they could keep their entrenchments fairly dry, the soil was not firm enough for deep excavations, and little remained of their forward positions after the incessant torrent of British shells. Abandoning these to their fate when destroyed, they relied more and more on the so-called "pill-boxes"—massive shelters built of reinforced concrete, sometimes many feet thick, with slits like the opening in a letter-box, through which machine-gun fire

could be poured on advancing infantry. These, and cunningly-hidden posts in craters and shell-holes—often not discovered until British troops had pushed beyond them, only to find themselves suddenly attacked in the rear—constituted the advance defences of the German zone round Ypres. When they were captured Ludendorff described them as the foremost crater-field of the German line.

North of Ypres the lip of the "Saucer" rested on the Yser-Ypres Canal, the enemy's line reaching its eastern bank just below Boesinghe. Thence it followed that waterway, and the wanderings of the River Yser, with which it is connected, to the coast, the whole area so choked with marsh and swamp—where it was not wholly under water with the inundations which foiled the invader in his first onrush to the coast—that only stationary warfare had been possible, save on some local scale, since the Belgians closed this gateway to the Channel ports nearly three years before. We, too, had prevented him from breaking through by way of Ypres, and now, it seemed, the time had come to push him right back behind the slithery slopes, winning in our turn the high rim which commanded views across the Flanders plain as far as Bruges, as well as back beyond the shattered ruins of Ypres. The capture of this ridge, in the words of the War Cabinet Report for 1917, "would both remove the disadvantages inherent in the occupation of a narrow salient, and would enable us to dominate the muddy plains of Flanders, to which, if our attacks succeeded, the enemy would be confined during the winter."

The series of battles which followed for these Flanders slopes opened at 3.50 a.m. on the morning of July 31, when the English, Scottish, Welsh, and Irish troops forming Sir Hubert Gough's Fifth Army, delivered the first assault. The plan of attack for the moment was to advance not in one sweeping rush but in a series of bounds, with which the French troops on their left were to keep step, securing them from counter-attack from the north, while General Plumer's Second Army covered them on their right.

The British Commander-in-Chief explains that these bounds of the Fifth Army were arranged so as to suit as far as possible both the position of the principal lines of the enemy's defences and the configuration of the ground. "It was hoped," he adds, "that in this first attack our troops would succeed in establishing themselves on the crest of the high ground east of Ypres, on which a strong flank could be formed for subsequent operations, and would also secure the crossings of the Steenbeek."

Though nearly two weeks of intense bombardment, and a final hurricane of shells before the infantry went over, had left the enemy in no doubt that another storm was brewing for him, the actual hour of attack came apparently as a surprise. In the north, where the Guards, and the French troops on their left, advanced side by side in the mist and darkness before the dawn, the whole of the first German trench system was carried with scarcely a check. Rapid progress was made, indeed, over the greater

part of the main front. "The enemy's barrage was late and weak," writes Sir Douglas Haig, "and our casualties were light." To the Welsh troops, on the right of our own Guards, fell the distinction of dealing, among others, with the battalion of Prussian Guards known as the "Berlin Cock-chafers"—styled by the Kaiser the crack battalion of his army—and so thoroughly did they fulfil their task that this famous battalion was practically annihilated. Capturing Pilkem at the same time, and beating off the strong forces thrown in to recapture that important position, the Welshmen had good reason that day to be proud of themselves.

Scottish troops farther south were also covering themselves with glory, storming Verlorenhoek with irresistible dash in the first rush, and, continuing their advance, reaching Frezenberg by 6 a.m. The importance attached to this position by the enemy was shown by the strength of his surrounding defences, and the stubborn battle which he waged for them, but after stiff, hand-to-hand fighting victory rested with the Scotsmen, who captured not only the village but also the formidable fortifications round it. By 9 a.m., so brilliantly had the day opened on the left of the Allied battle-front that the whole of our second objectives north of the Ypres-Roulers Railway were in our possession, save for the strong point north of Frezenberg, known as Pommern Redoubt, for which a fierce fight was still raging. Even this, however, fell an hour later to West Lancashire Territorials.

On the British left General Anthoine's

French troops had in the meantime made equal progress, capturing their objective in strict accordance with the arranged programme, and with little loss. The rain which had been threatening since daybreak still held off, and our field artillery had begun to move up. By 9.30 a.m. a number of batteries were already in action in their forward positions. On this portion of the front the Allied advance was resumed according to schedule. English county troops, including the Hertfordshire Regiment, which won high honour that day, captured St. Julien by a dashing advance over the battle-ground already immortalized by the Canadians in the German gas attack at the Second Battle of Ypres. Some 15 German howitzers and hundreds of prisoners were among the spoils collected at St. Julien. In the meanwhile Highland Territorials and Welsh and Guards battalions had secured the crossings of the Steenbeek, while French troops, not content with reaching their final objectives, had advanced beyond them and seized Bixschoote. Realizing their increasing danger on this flank the Germans launched an early counter-attack against the Allied point of junction, but were completely repulsed.

Had it been possible to make similar headway in the centre of attack, or if only Sir Douglas Haig had enjoyed half the German luck in the matter of weather, the whole course of future operations on the Western front might have been different. But the difficult country east of Ypres, where the Menin Road of evil memory crosses the crest of the

Wytschaete - Passchendaele Ridge, formed the key to the enemy's position; and it was here, among the derelict woods and copses, and the cratered slopes dotted with pill-boxes and bristling with machine-guns, that the Germans put up their stoutest defence. Nevertheless the attacking brigades, including a number of Lancashire battalions, regiments from all parts of England, and a few Scottish and Irish battalions, fought their way foot by foot through the tangled horrors to left and right of the Menin Road, entering the depths of Shrewsbury Forest—though not capturing the whole of it until the following day—winning back the long-lost Sanctuary Wood and the strong point beyond, once a French château, but now a heap of fortified ruins, known as Stirling Castle; as well as the wreckage of Hooze, which had changed hands so often in the ebb and flow of the German tide round Ypres.

Bellewarde Ridge, above Hooze, was also recovered that morning in Gough's advance south of the Ypres-Roulers Railway. Here, however, every yard of the ground was stubbornly contested; and when, in due course, the troops on this part of our front advanced in time with the divisions on their left they encountered the fiercest opposition of the day. All the surrounding woods and copses were held by machine-guns, which swept every approach with a tornado of fire. The rain, long threatening, set in steadily early in the afternoon, and converted the ground into a swamp. This not only cruelly handicapped our infantry; it

prevented many of the tanks from co-operating in the attack - though some succeeded in pushing through in spite of everything—and it made flying almost impossible. Nothing, however, was quite impossible to our indomitable airmen, who, in spite of the weather, as Sir Douglas Haig bore witness at the time, kept contact with our advancing infantry throughout the day, firing into the enemy's troops whenever the opportunity presented itself, and bombing his aerodromes and transport in the rear. The few German machines which attempted to fly were at once attacked, and six of them were brought down. Only three of our machines were missing at the end of that day's gallant work.

In the renewed advance of our infantry in the centre of the battle-field the greatest opposition was met in front of the two small woods known as Inverness Copse and Glencorse Wood, which, like so many other familiar spots, were filled with memories of earlier struggles in the Salient. It was at Inverness Copse and Glencorse Wood that a few tanks, notwithstanding the exceedingly bad ground, succeeded in reaching the firing line and entering into action with our infantry. To the south one strong point in Shrewsbury Forest was still holding out against all our attacks; but to the north, above the Menin Road and Glencorse Wood, English troops, resuming their advance in defiance of the weather and the enemy's resistance, reached the outskirts of the village of Westhoek and held on. Heavy counter-attacks now began to develop from south of the

Menin Road northwards to St. Julien, and continued through the rest of the day. Our troops were unable to make any further headway, but the enemy, on the other hand, failed to shake our hold upon the ridge, and suffered the most sanguinary losses in his vain endeavours. Notwithstanding the weather, which rendered observation for our batteries extremely difficult, our artillery added tremendously to the enemy's casualties in these counter-attacks.

To sum up the net results of the main assault on July 31, we cannot do better than quote Sir Douglas Haig as follows:—

"At the end of the day our troops on the Fifth Army front had carried the German first system of defence south of Westhoek. Except at Westhoek itself, where they were established on the outskirts of the village, they had already gained the whole of the crest of the ridge and had denied the enemy observation over the Ypres plain. Farther north they had captured the enemy's second line also as far as St. Julien. North of that village they had passed beyond the German second line, and held the line of the Steenbeek to our junction with the French. On our left flank our Allies had admirably completed the important task allotted to them. Close touch had been kept with the British troops on their right throughout the day. All and more than all their objectives had been gained rapidly and at exceptionally light cost, and the flank of the Allied advance had been effectively secured."

Complete success in the meantime had also attended Sir Herbert Plumer's attack on the right flank with the Second Army. Here, between La Basse Ville, on the extreme right, and the trying ground about Battle Wood and the bend of the Ypres

Comines Canal on the left, some of the stiffest fighting of the day took place, though the troops were not called upon to cover so much ground as in the north. La Basse Ville, a heap of ruins representing what had once been a peaceful little village near the Lys, fell to the New Zealanders. It had been won and lost before, and was still held by stout foes, but they were no match that morning for the Dominion men, who cleared a path through the rubbish heaps in almost less time than it takes to write, rooting out the bombers and nests of machine-guns, and blowing up the cellars when the enemy refused to leave his dug-outs there. It was all over in less than an hour, and a counter-attack, launched during the afternoon, was beaten back. The Australians, who were battling for the broken ground farther north, where the shell-holes and hedges, and remains of a windmill, were all fortified with fiendish ingenuity, had a longer struggle in front of them, especially for the ruined mill. This struggle was one of the outstanding incidents of the day's battle. The windmill itself was nameless, but the slight knoll on which it stood, on a plain possessing no distinguishing marks, made it, like the famous mill at Pozières, a prize worth fighting for to the death. The Australians carried the place by storm on the first wave of the battle in the early morning, but the Germans, knowing its value for observation purposes, especially after their loss of the Messines Ridge, strove again and again to recover possession. At length they launched a counter-attack

in the evening in such strength that they threatened completely to encircle the place. Before they did so, however, the little Australian garrison escaped, leaving it to their guns to pave the way for another and final turning of the tables. At midnight, therefore, after the windmill had been shelled for two or three hours, the Commonwealth troops returned to the attack, and, again carrying the position at the point of the bayonet, remained in possession.

Above the Australians English troops had meanwhile carried Hollebeke, and the powerful defences surrounding it, in the earliest hours of the day, fighting their way in almost pitch darkness from Battle Wood and the trenches at the White Château, both of which had been conquered by General Plumer with the Messines Ridge. In the darkness they overlooked some of the Germans hidden in shell-pits, who presently began sniping them from the rear—even deliberately shooting the wounded lying helpless in the open, so it was afterwards asserted by our troops—until they were all routed out and dealt with as they deserved. With the capture of Hollebeke and the blowing up of its labyrinth of cellars—all crowded with Germans who would not come up—together with the final clearing of the difficult bend north of the Ypres-Comines Railway, the task of the Second Army was for the time being accomplished. General Plumer had advanced his line on the whole front, strictly in accordance with the arranged plan, for distances varying from 200 to 800 yards.

On the whole, therefore, though the door had not been forced open in the very centre of the battle-field, the day had been crowned with high achievement; and, apart from the weather, was full of promise. Over 6000 prisoners, including 133 officers, had been captured by the Fifth and Second Armies combined, together with some twenty-five guns, a further number of prisoners and guns having been captured by the French on our left. The day closed with a generous and well-deserved tribute from Sir Douglas Haig to the work of the French army under General Anthoine, addressed to Pétain, the French Generalissimo, who, in responding, declared that the success of the combined attacks had drawn the French and British armies still closer, if that were possible, and increased their faith in the ultimate triumph of the Allies' cause. For the present, however, everything now depended on the weather, and here, as on so many previous occasions of the kind, Fortune smiled only on the enemy. Rain had fallen steadily since the early afternoon and continued all night.

"Thereafter, for four days," lamented Sir Douglas Haig, who never complained without good cause, "the rain continued without cessation, and for several days afterwards the weather remained stormy and unsettled. The low-lying, clayey soil, torn by shells and sodden with rain, turned to a succession of vast muddy pools. The valleys of the choked and overflowing streams were speedily transformed into long stretches of bog, impassable except by a few well-defined tracks, which became marks for the enemy's artillery. To leave these tracks was to risk death by drowning, and in the course of the

subsequent fighting on several occasions both men and pack animals were lost in this way. In these conditions operations of any magnitude became impossible, and the resumption of our offensive was necessarily postponed until a period of fine weather should allow the ground to recover. As had been the case in the Arras battle, this unavoidable delay in the development of our offensive was of the greatest service to the enemy. Valuable time was lost, the troops opposed to us were able to recover from the disorganization produced by our first attack, and the enemy was given the opportunity to bring up reinforcements."

While the British troops were lying under the pitiless rain before Inverness Copse and all the other fragments of forest and wood still held by the enemy east of Ypres—digging themselves in as best they could, and taking cover in shell-holes—tentative counter-attacks gradually gave place to more powerful thrusts as soon as the German reserves arrived on the scene. All through the night of July 31 and the following day the enemy's shell-fire never ceased, our guns replying with long-range bombardments and heavy barrages. The steadfastness and devotion of our artillery throughout this ordeal was beyond praise. Whenever our infantry advanced our guns followed, at the cost of almost incredible exertion, over exposed ground torn by shell-fire and sodden with rain. Often the S.O.S. signal for artillery help coincided with the warning of approaching German gas, and cases could be multiplied, as Sir Douglas Haig testifies, where our gunners, throwing aside their half-adjusted gas masks—knowing full well

the deadly risks they ran---fought their guns in response to the call till the enemy's attack was beaten off. One heroic instance is singled out as a general example of what our gunners did in this opening phase of the Flanders Battle. A howitzer battery, situated in an unavoidably exposed position in the neighbourhood of Zillebeke Lake, and already subjected to incessant shelling, received orders—and 400 rounds for the purpose—to cut a section of German wire in the region of Hooze. Not more than fifty of these rounds had been fired when a hostile 15-centimetre battery opened a steady and accurate fire in enfilade. Whenever the British battery opened, salvos of 15-centimetre shells raked its position in reply. One by one its ammunition dumps were blown up and its guns put out of action, but the two surviving guns of the original six continued in action until the last of the 400 rounds had been fired. Later, when it came to the infantry's turn to advance over this sector, the enemy's wire was found completely cut.

But for the gunners, indeed, the magnificent courage of our infantry would have been in vain. While the rain held up our offensive the reinforced enemy delivered one counter-attack after another against many points of our new line, but more particularly against the high ground which we had won between the Menin Road and the Ypres-Roulers Railway, and between Frezenberg and St. Julien, where we had robbed him of his second- as well as his first-line system. Driven back beyond the

crater field he was on ground less affected by the weather, and did not fail to make the most of his advantage. His supreme effort was made in the afternoon of August 1, when, preceded by a devastating barrage and clouds of smoke, his picked storm troops, taking advantage of the prevailing mist to assemble in forward positions, advanced in waves from the direction of Zonnebeke, Bremen Redoubt, and the high ground beyond our line between that stronghold and St. Julien. Under the weight of these assaults, and the violence of the enemy's artillery fire, St. Julien became untenable, and we were forced temporarily to withdraw from that place. Fighting stubbornly all the way, however, we retained a bridge-head across the Steenbeek, just north of the village.

Between Frezenberg, which the Scotsmen had won on the preceding day, and the Roulers Railway, where the Scotsmen linked up with the Midlanders—Sherwood Foresters and the men of Nottingham and Derby among them—who had meantime fought their way at the same time up the Westhoek Ridge, the situation was for some time critical. At first, owing to the mist and smoke, our gunners had not seen the S.O.S. signals, and the German artillery barrage, accompanied by a wide-stretching blast of machine-gun fire from every possible point of vantage, had our men at its mercy. The Sherwoods and their comrades, who were destined to bear the first brunt of the infantry assault, had little cover from the preliminary German bombardment save the enemy's abandoned "pill-boxes", but, when the

infantry came, they stood up manfully to them with bombs, rifles, and machine-guns, until our own artillery, warned of their danger, came to their aid. The fighting which followed was described by those who took part in it as essentially a soldiers' battle. Non-coms. and men carried on unfalteringly when officers fell dead or wounded. An eye-witness, who inspected the line that evening in the shell-pits and craters round Westhoek and the Roulers Railway, told one correspondent how he found every platoon in its place, with the men responding without hesitation to the sergeants and corporals who survived. They had inflicted fearful losses that afternoon on the counter-attacking Germans, who, forcing their way forward among the shell-holes, had striven in vain to surround these hard-pressed Midland men.

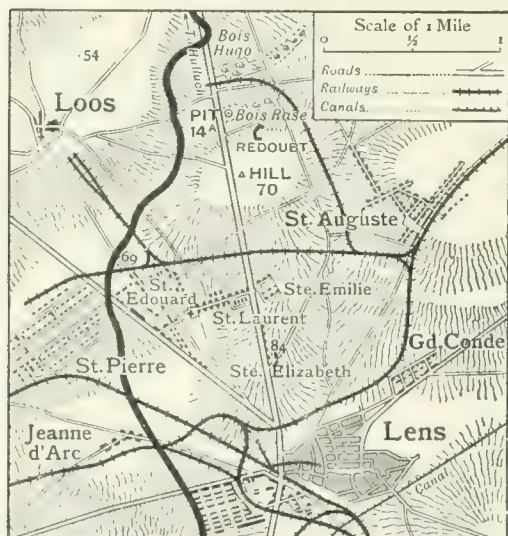
The situation became even more critical on their left, where the Scotsmen, as a result of these happenings, presently found their flank dangerously exposed.

"It became more and more exposed as the attack proceeded," to quote from Mr. Philip Gibbs's account at the time from the war correspondents' head-quarters, "and just before three o'clock the Gordons, who were in this perilous position, had to swing back. This movement uncovered the battalion head-quarters, where one of the officers acting as adjutant had turned out his staff, who fought to defend the position. He then gathered all the Gordons in his neighbourhood and held on to the station buildings. Meantime, the left of the Gordons had been swung back to form a defensive flank, and with two Vickers guns they swept the rear lines of the storm-troops with deadly fire. The enemy fell in great numbers, but

other waves came on and nearly reached the top of the crest upon which our men had formed their line. There a young officer of the Gordons seized the critical moment of the battle, and by his rapid action proved himself a great soldier. With some of the Camerons he led his men forward down the slopes towards the advancing enemy, each man firing with his rifle as he advanced, making gaps in the German wave. The enemy stood up to this for a minute or two; but, when the Highlanders were within fifty yards of them, broke and ran."

The day was saved, for though other efforts were made both here and elsewhere, the slight readjustments of our front which they rendered necessary at various points, including the relinquishment of St. Julien, made little impression on our new line. Here, in the afternoon, the enemy had succeeded, at great cost, in gaining a foothold in our advanced positions, but counter-attacks, launched late in the evening, drove him back at all points, and, save at St. Julien, completely re-established our former line. Steady progress was made to consolidate the captured ground—as far as any consolidation was possible in the execrable state of the weather—and every opportunity seized to improve our positions. Two days after our evacuation of St. Julien we retook it without serious opposition, linking up our line with the bridge-head we had retained on the right bank of the Steenbeek, farther north. A week later the weather improved sufficiently to warrant a minor operation, which gave us at length complete possession of the village of Westhoek—carried with fine dash by the East Lancashires and Lancashire Fusiliers, and

held in the face of six counter-attacks before night closed on some of the sternest close-quarter fighting yet witnessed, in and out of Glencorse Wood, as well as round the neighbouring Westhoek Ridge. The Bedfords and Queen's West Surreys, showing, as ever, magnificent courage, were in the thick of this swaying, indecisive struggle for Glencorse Wood, where



The British Line West and North of Lens before the Canadians Advance of August 15, 1917 (heights shown in metres)

the cruel contest was comparable only with the ghastly struggles of the previous year for all those evil spots on the Somme battle-field—Delville Wood, Trônes Wood, and their like.

While plans were maturing for a renewal of the main offensive as soon as the weather improved, the Lens operations were resumed by the Canadians, partly in order still further to improve their situation in that sector, but more particularly to prevent the enemy from concentrating the whole

of his attention and resources in the northern zone. The Canadians, seizing every opportunity to creep nearer and nearer to the threatened mining town, had by this time worked their way almost through the south-western suburb of Avion, and, beyond that, were up to the flooded region everywhere south of the Souchez river. On August 15 they attacked the northern defences of Lens, fanning to flames the long-smouldering embers of the Loos battle-field by a triumphant assault on Hill 70 and the neighbouring outskirts of the town. Nearly two years had passed since the dauntless Scots of the 15th Division swept right over that evil ridge of ground on the Lens-Hulluch road, only to find themselves forced to retire for lack of support. Some of their units, it will be remembered, carried away by their ardour, had fought their way to Cité St. Auguste, one of the suburbs of Lens itself, but few of these had succeeded in getting back. All the heroic fighting which ensued for Hill 70 had left this bastion of the northern defences of Lens in the enemy's hands. The situation had been little changed in the two years, less a month, which elapsed before the Canadians picked up the tangled threads of the operations as a sequel to their capture of the Vimy Ridge, which dominated the entire German system of defences about Lens from the south.

When they attacked at dawn, on August 15, 1917, on a front of 4000 yards south-east and east of Loos, the objectives of the Dominion troops consisted not only of Hill 70, but also of the mining suburbs of Cité Ste. Eliza-

beth, Cité St. Emile, and Cité St. Laurent, together with the whole of the Bois Rase and the western half of Bois Hugo. Practically the whole of these objectives, well pounded beforehand with our destructive barrage, were carried at comparatively little cost, and in exact accordance with

of this formidable barrier was a fine feat of arms, and led to terrific fighting in the counter-attacks, and among the more resolute defenders beyond the hill, where, at the farthest apex of the Canadians' advance, a powerfully fortified length of German trench west of Cité St. Auguste resisted their first



Canadian War Records

A Well-earned Rest: Canadian troops who captured Hill 70 in the Lens operations on their way to camp after being relieved

plan. Hill 70, apparently, though fortified and strengthened by every known device since the Battle of Loos, was only lightly held by the enemy, and by his younger class of soldiers. The best Prussian troops, according to Mr. Philip Gibbs, who was on the spot at the time, had been kept back to hold the inner defences of Lens, as well as to counter-attack wherever necessary. Nevertheless, the capture

assault. Returning to the attack on the afternoon of the following day, they won their way into this obstinate position foot by foot, and after a fierce struggle lasting far into the night, finally conquered it.

Counter-attack after counter-attack was launched by the enemy, both here and at other points of the Canadians' advance, but in each case was broken up with heavy loss. The Fourth



Canadian War Records

King George with his Canadian Troops: crossing the captured Vimy Ridge with General Sir A. W. Currie, commanding the Canadian forces (in centre), and General Sir H. Horne (on right)

It will be noticed that His Majesty did not wear his steel helmet on this occasion.

Prussian Guards were thrown into the fray, but met with no better success than other storm troops flung against the devoted Canadians in successive attempts to win back these captured defences. Not a foot of lost ground was regained. All told, in these operations, apart from the enemy's other casualties, the Dominion troops captured 1200 prisoners from three German divisions; and, with the possession of the observation from Hill 70, which had been extremely useful to the Germans, had materially improved their command over the defences of Lens.

To their new chief, General Currie,

Sir Douglas Haig sent his hearty congratulations on having inaugurated his command with this brilliant success.

"The divisions you employed on August 15," he added, "totally defeated four German divisions, whose losses are roughly estimated at more than double those suffered by the Canadian troops. The skill, bravery, and determination shown in the attack, and in maintaining the positions won against repeated heavy counter-attacks, were in all respects admirable."

While Sir Douglas Haig was thus compelling the enemy to guard himself on other fronts he was planning

to strike again at Ypres. In the midst of the German counter-attacks at Lens he launched his second assault east and north of the Salient, General Gough's troops advancing at 4.45 a.m. on August 16 on a front extending from the north-west corner of Inverness Copse to their junction on the left with the French, who were committed at the same time to the task of clearing up the remainder of the swampy neck of ground known as the Bixschoote peninsula. A slight improvement in the weather towards the middle of the month had raised hopes that we might yet be able to make up for lost time, but the battlefield was still little more than a quagmire, with innumerable craters and shell-holes half-filled with water, and mud so deep that men sometimes sank in it up to their waists.

It is necessary always to bear these conditions in mind when we measure the amount of ground gained in this uphill struggle against a determined enemy who had all the odds of position in his favour. Again, as on the opening day of the first attack, the most arduous part of the task was encountered on the British right and centre, among the woods and copses and pill-boxes which barred the way between the

Menin Road and St. Julien. Here, in the centre of the British advance, the new system of German defence, combined with the appalling state of the ground, undoubtedly served its purpose all too well for the immediate success of Sir Douglas Haig's plans. The British Commander-in-Chief himself admits as much in his dispatch of the following January:—

"Our recent successes had conclusively proved that the enemy's infantry were unable to hold the strongest defences against a properly mounted attack, and that increasing the number of his troops in his forward defence systems merely added to his losses. Accordingly, the enemy had adopted a system of elastic defence, in which his forward trench lines were held only in sufficient strength to disorganize



United War Records

His Majesty's Fourth Visit to his Army in the Field. Leaving an observation post captured by the Canadians on the Vimy Ridge.

the attack, while the bulk of his forces were kept in close reserve, ready to deliver a powerful and immediate blow which might recover the positions overrun by our troops before we had had time to consolidate them. In the heavy fighting east of Ypres, these tactics had undoubtedly met with a certain measure of success. While unable to drive us back from the ridge, they had succeeded, in combination with the state of the ground and weather, in checking our progress."

For the success of this new policy the Germans relied largely on their concrete strong-points, or "pill-boxes", built in the ruins of farms and in other suitable spots where the soft soil made it impossible to construct the deep-mined dug-outs which had been one of the outstanding features of their defence system on the Somme. These field forts, heavily armed with machine-guns, and manned for the most part by men determined to hold on at all costs, were distributed in depth along the whole front of our advance, but especially in the centre of the British attack, offering everywhere a formidable obstacle to progress. It was in the British centre that the two Irish divisions, whose simple heroism and dauntless courage against overwhelming odds had been proved so often before, now suffered their hours of fiercest trial. Just as at the battle of Messines, where only a few weeks previously the Nationalist hero, Major William Redmond, M.P., made the supreme sacrifice, so Southern Irishmen and men of Ulster now fought side by side with the fervour which had sunk all national differences in the common struggle, and revealed the real Irish spirit at its best.

This time, alas! their heroic sacri-

fices were not destined to be rewarded with the victory they deserved. They had to advance over a wide stretch of frightful ground—stretching roughly from Fortuin on the Poelcappelle road to the Ypres-Roulers Railway, just east of Frezenberg—marked only by shell-torn fields and crevices cut by the flooded streams; and dotted by concrete forts, held by Bavarian machine-gunners at every point of vantage along its insignificant slopes. The most formidable of these strongholds, crowning the spur known as Hill 35, commanded all the avenues of approach from the Irish trenches, and took heavy toll as soon as the attacking infantry swept forward in the early hours of August 16.

The Southern Irishmen were on the right of this sector of attack, across the Zonnebeke-Frezenberg road, with the Ulster Division on the left. Directly in front of both were not only the concrete and still unbroken field forts—manned by garrisons varying in strength from 20 to 80 and even 100 men, all well equipped both with machine-guns and ammunition—but also by individual machine-gunners, holding isolated posts in accordance with the enemy's new system of defence. These were all hidden or disguised, so that their harassing fire was extremely difficult to locate. The redoubts were on both sides of the shallow Zonnebeke stream, which crossed the line of attack, and, swollen by the abnormal rains, added considerably to the enemy's advantages of position.

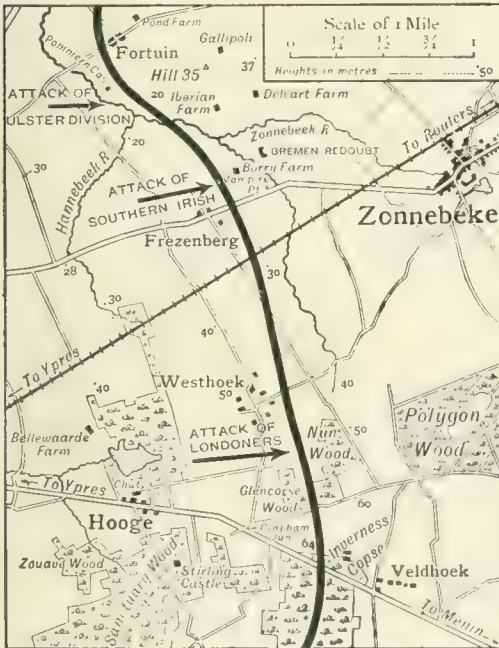
A whole chapter could be devoted to the heroic deeds of the two Irish Divisions which faced this ordeal on

August 16, 1917, before our methods were revised in order to counter the enemy's new system of resistance. Undismayed by the remorseless fire which swept the whole battle-ground as they left their trenches, they fought their way through the thinly-held posts along the crater line, only to be swept

men's only troubles. They were enfiladed from "Gallipoli" and other strong points; mown down at one critical spot where a thick belt of wire had been incompletely cut; and were constantly sniped behind from isolated posts overlooked in the churned-up crater line.

On their right the Southern Irishmen, who had crossed the Zonnebeke stream before the advance, were fighting with equal valour against similar odds, carrying a number of the concrete strongholds as they advanced, and at some points reaching their final objectives. "Borry Farm", where the Inniskillings and Irish Fusiliers fought with a courage worthy of their highest traditions; "Vampire Point", and the "Iberian" and "Delvart" Farms, were all sanguinary spots on the Southern Irishmen's front. Though some of these were reduced as the troops advanced, others held out throughout the day, and delayed the arrival of our supports. To add to the attackers' hardships, the weather conditions made aeroplane observation practically impossible, with the result that, when some of our final objectives were reached—and Hill 35 itself was in our hands for one brief period—no warning was received of the enemy's heavy counter-attacks, and our infantry obtained little artillery support against them.

The counter-attacks developed before the morning was over, and our exhausted men, decimated by the infernal shell-fire which preceded them, were gradually compelled to fall back. Hill 35 was torn from their grasp after grim hand-to-hand fighting early in



The Battle-ground East of Ypres on August 16, 1917: map showing the approximate positions of the British line before the attack (heights shown in metres)

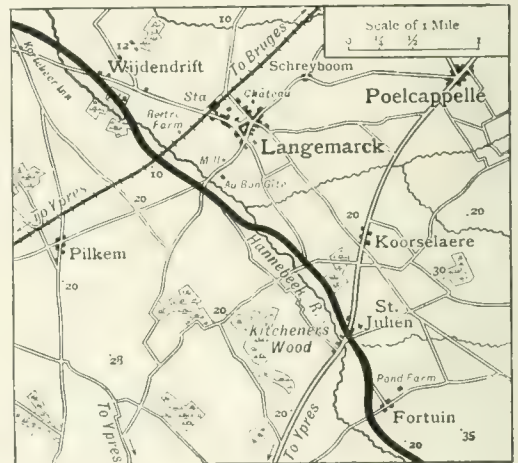
by intense fire at different angles from the defending forts behind. Just below their starting-point, south of Fortuin, the Ulster men were held up for a time by an old battery position, with its concrete pits bristling with machine-guns, and the more formidable fortification known as Pond Farm, with deep dug-outs full of resolute defenders. They cleared up gun-pits, Pond Farm, and dug-outs alike, but these were far from being the Ulster

the evening. Then, to quote from the accounts sent at the time by the correspondent of the *Morning Post*:—

"The counter-attacks drove in the thinned but still determined line of Irishmen, and they came back across the riddled ground, some of them wounded, all in the last stages of exhaustion, pausing in their unwilling journey to fire at the snipers who harassed them, reaching at last the trenches they left at dawn, angry, and bitter, and disappointed, but undismayed—the heroes of a splendid failure. For heroes they are, every man of them. They died together, men of Antrim and men of Clare; they died to help each other."

On the left centre the fortunes of war were more favourable. Here West Lancashire Territorials, and troops from other English counties, established themselves on a line running north from St. Julien to the old German third line due north of Langemarck. Maintaining this line against all the enemy's counter-attacks, they thereby secured the flank of the English Brigades which, by their victory on this sector of the battle-field, saved the day with an equivalent success. Somerset and Cornish men, with battalions of Riflemen and the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, played a glorious part in the taking of Langemarck itself and the German defences beyond. The hamlet of Wijndendrift, to the left of the village, was carried in the first assault, but on the outskirts of the larger objective—fragments of blackened tree-stumps and desolate mounds of ruins alone marking the spot where Langemarck had once stood—the attack was held up for a time by two of the enemy's field forts. One of these had been built

on the solid foundations of Reitres Farm, and its machine-guns raked the ground from the Steenbeek, over which our advancing troops had to pass. Another of these death-traps, farther to the south and nearer the stream, had walls 10 feet thick, and bore the grimly inappropriate name of "Au bon Gîte", from the ancient sign of the wayside *estaminet* which in more



The Battle-ground North of Ypres on August 16, 1917: map showing the approximate positions of the British line before the capture of Langemarck (heights shown in metres)

peaceful days had offered good cheer to the Flemish farmers on their way to and from the station or market at Langemarck. The garrison of this blockhouse held out until our men swept past it—leaving some dauntless bombers behind to wait in patience for their prey. Their patience was presently rewarded with the tame surrender of the garrison, some 40 or 50 strong. The defenders of Reitres Farm were made of sterner stuff, maintaining a destructive barrage of machine-gun fire long after they were surrounded. Several attempts were made in vain to carry this stronghold

by storm, but at last one indomitable machine-gunner of ours swept round the fort and, reaching its deadly loop-hole, thrust in the barrel of his Lewis gun, and fired. Not many moments elapsed before a strip of white was seen fluttering from another opening in token of surrender.

There was sharp, savage fighting elsewhere along this sector, where the British success was largely due to individual initiative and disciplined heroism on the part of the men. Instances occurred, as on other days of the great offensive, where privates were found commanding companies with skill and coolness when all their officers and non-commissioned officers had fallen. "I hope you will tell how the men fought through all this mud," said one Battalion Commander afterwards, "and of their remarkable resolution. No human beings could have done more; the amazing thing is that they could have done so much." Langemarck was taken by 8 a.m., and, following up this success, our troops proceeded to attack the positions on the Langemarck-Poelcappelle line which formed their final objective. An hour later, save for a short length of trench north-east of Langemarck, they had gained these positions also, and later repelled a couple of small counter-attacks.

The enemy made no attempt to retake Langemarck itself, though in his official account of this day's battle he had the effrontery to claim that the lost position was again in his hands. It needed another imaginary fight to explain how it was that the British were in complete possession on the following day.

It was on the right of the British attack, just above the Menin Road, where the Londoners advanced at dawn below Glencorse Wood, in the direction of Polygon Wood, that the enemy, in the words of Sir Douglas Haig's dispatch, "developed the main strength of his resistance". Here he had brought up fresh divisions to dispute every inch of ground, with massed reserves immediately behind, composed of his finest storm troops. Here, too, he stood on comparatively high ground, with strips of wood and copse among which he could prepare his counter-attacks unseen. Yet the Londoners, after lying out all night in the mud under heavy fire, struggled forward at the appointed hour with such spirit that some detachments reached as far as their final objectives in Polygon Wood—though the greater part of it was under water—and the north of Nun Wood, which helps to mask the larger wood. Parties of Middlesex actually brought prisoners out of Polygon Wood, after carrying several redoubts and strong points from which a galling fire had made many gaps in their own ranks, as well as in those of other battalions in equally exposed positions, floundering in isolated groups through a morass which made rapid progress impossible. Then came the German counter-attacks, from north as well as south, preceded by a bombardment of great intensity; and what happened to the Irishmen more to the north now happened to the Londoners. They held on in groups to their captured positions until they could hold on no longer, and then fought their way back, foot by

foot, against ever-increasing odds, or were cut off and surrounded. "At the end of a day of very heavy fighting," records Sir Douglas Haig, "except for small gains of wood on the western edge of Glencorse Wood and north of Westhoek, the situation south of St. Julien remained unchanged."

It was a day strangely marked with victory and reverse. On the extreme left of the battle-field, where General Anthoine's First French Army linked up with the British troops who had saved the day at Langemarck, our Allies' advance had proved a brilliant success, though a few fortified farms in the neighbourhood of the Steenbeek once more gave trouble and held out for some time. Elsewhere the French had gained all their objectives, not only rapidly, but again at exceptionally low cost. The bridgehead of the Drie Grachten was secured and the whole of the peninsula cleared of the enemy. Thus, in spite of the check at the southern part of our line, the day closed, again to quote from Sir Douglas Haig's dispatch, "as a decided success for the Allies". In addition to the wide gap which had been made in the old German third-line system, over 2100 prisoners had been captured, together with some 30 guns.

Thereafter, unfortunately, the weather broke again, and the month closed as the wettest August that had been known for years, rendering im-

possible further assaults on a grand scale before September, but affording Sir Douglas Haig time to revise his methods of attack in order to cope with the situation created by the enemy's new system of defence. Meanwhile the way was prepared for the third attack by a number of small operations east and north-east of Ypres, delivered, in the face of the worst conditions of ground and weather imaginable, with the object of reducing certain of the enemy's concrete barriers and other important positions blocking the path to the heights beyond. Ground was gained in the neighbourhood of St. Julien on the 19th, 22nd, and 27th August, representing an advance of some 800 yards on a front of over two miles. The Tanks again played a part in these operations, and were the means of reducing some of the concrete blockhouses which had proved so troublesome in the previous assaults; but the continued rain made the boggy ground even more difficult for these unwieldy monsters than for the infantry. The 22nd also witnessed another desperate local push astride the Menin Road, where, after six days of stubborn, continuous fighting, English troops succeeded in securing a firm footing on the western edge of Inverness Copse, a hold which was to stand us in good stead when Sir Douglas Haig's third grand attack came to be delivered in the following month.

F. A. M.

CHAPTER XIV

THE THIRD YEAR OF THE WAR

(August, 1916—August, 1917)

A Year of Growing Pressure—The Ministerial Crisis of December, 1916—Ministerial Changes—Mr. Bonar Law's Budget—The Great Loan—Votes of Credit, and Growing Cost of the War—"Combing Out"—The Great Food Question—Imports and Exports—Labour Troubles—The Peace Offensive—The Stockholm Conference—The Imperial Conference.

WHEN the third year of the war began, Mr. Asquith's unwieldy Coalition Cabinet was struggling with no great success to meet the increasing pressure of the times. At the very close of the summer session the Chancellor of the Exchequer stated the total amount of the money obligations already incurred. They were then £3,444,000,000, including £800,000,000 which had been advanced to Allies and Dominions. It is true that wonders were being done to provide munitions. Mr. Montagu, who was then at the head of the office, could say that we were now able to produce in one month more guns than had been turned out between June, 1915, and June, 1916.

But the work to be done grew with rapid strides, and in ways few, if any, had foreseen. There was also the lack of ships—2,001,000 tons had been lost by October, 1916. As a great part of our shipping was taken for the supply of the army, this reduction of shipping reacted on the food supply, which was daily becoming more difficult. New needs compelled the employment of fresh branches of administration. The old party Cabinet system, which had grown during two centuries and a half, had already

broken down before the end of the second year of the war.¹ After Parliament rose for the summer recess of 1916, the belief began to grow that a modern Cabinet, even when it was not a purely party body, was ill adapted for the needs of the time. A Cabinet formed according to recent practice had little in common but the name with the small homogeneous bodies which had ruled during the great wars of former times. It was too large, too much distracted by the calls of an administration of ever-increasing complexity, to devote itself to a duty which demands unity of direction above all else.

There would have been good cause for wonder if Mr. Asquith's Coalition Cabinet had met Parliament, which assembled again in October, 1916, with a good prospect of maintaining its position, even if it had avoided all errors. And errors of management were not avoided. We need not go into details, which, indeed, were often worth noting only because they indicated the existence of a lack of administrative capacity and firmness of direction, and gave an impression of weakness. The Ministry appeared in various ways to be inert, or to move

¹ See Chapter V, Vol. VI.

only under external impulse. It practically confessed to the justice of the charge of being feeble in enforcing blockade by appointing Lord Robert Cecil as Minister. It convinced nobody that the many complaints made of lavish grant of exemptions from military service were unfounded. The kind of deadlock which was allowed to come to pass between the navy and the army air services spoke only too forcibly of a deficiency in comprehensiveness of view, and in grasp of practical questions.

Therefore, no general surprise could be felt when a sharp crisis broke out in the first days of December, 1916. It had been in preparation for some time. The necessity for a change was widely recognized, and Mr. Asquith himself shared the general opinion. The question was really how the needful alteration was to be made. The issue as it presented itself when the crisis was ripe was simple. Mr. Lloyd George, who came forward as spokesman of the widely felt discontent, held that the overgrown and unwieldy Coalition Cabinet was radically unfit to direct a war. He advocated the formation of a small War Cabinet of seven, which should be entrusted with the direction of the conflict, by the side, and apart from the main Cabinet, presided over by the Prime Minister. The proposal was not acceptable to Mr. Asquith, for reasons which he gave, and which possess undeniable force. Unless the Prime Minister was himself to be the head of the select, or War, Cabinet, the existence of such a body would reduce him to the position of a mere spectator of the

war. The truth of his contention was, indeed, so obvious that his successor in office was constrained to combine the Prime Ministership with the presidency of the War Cabinet. It is needless to dwell on the arguments on either side of the case; still less on accusations of a personal character, which were freely bandied. The essence of the dispute was that while the Unionist part of the supporters of the Coalition Ministry was not prepared to agree to the presidency of Mr. Asquith in the War Cabinet, the Liberal was no less firmly resolved that he could not be expected to submit to be relegated to the humiliating position of spectator of the war. An attempted compromise, verbally arranged between Mr. Asquith and Mr. Lloyd George, was revealed in the press—and was ill received. Mr. Asquith reverted to his first position, and insisted that he as Prime Minister must also preside over the War Cabinet. To this Mr. Lloyd George would not agree. The Coalition Cabinet had, in fact, broken in two. Mr. Asquith resigned office. After it was shown that Mr. Bonar Law could not obtain the adhesion of Liberals which would be necessary before they could form a Cabinet, the task was given to Mr. Lloyd George, whose administration was thus formed on December 7.

When first formed, Mr. Lloyd George's Cabinet was constituted as follows: Its construction is graphically illustrated on page 236 of *The War Cabinet Report [Official] for the Year 1917*. A small central cabinet was supplemented by a numerous ministry of "executive" heads of departments.

Prime Minister	Unpaid	David Lloyd George.
Lord High Chancellor	£10,000	Lord Finlay.
Minister without portfolio	£5000	Viscount Milner.
Minister without portfolio	£5000	Mr Arthur Henderson.
Minister without portfolio	£5000	Lord Curzon of Kedleston.

Mr. Lloyd George, Lord Milner, cellor of the Exchequer, formed the Mr. Henderson, Lord Curzon, and War Cabinet. Mr. Bonar Law, who was also Chan-

Lord Privy Seal	Unpaid	Lord Crawford.
First Lord of the Treasury	£5000	The Prime Minister.
First Lord of the Admiralty	£4500	Sir Edward Carson.
Secretaries of State—		
Home Affairs	£5000	Sir George Cave.
Foreign Affairs	£5000	Mr. A. J. Balfour.
Colonies	£5000	Mr. Walter Long.
War	£5000	Lord Derby.
India	£5000	Mr. Austen Chamberlain.
Chancellor of the Exchequer	£5000	Mr. Bonar Law.
Minister of Munitions	£5000	Dr. Addison.
President of the Air Board ... ..	... ..	Lord Cowdray
President of Committees of the Council—		
Board of Trade	£5000	Sir Edward Stanley.
Local Government Board	£5000	Lord Rhondda.
Board of Education	£2000	Mr. Herbert A. T. Fisher.
Board of Agriculture and Fisheries	£2000	Mr. Rowland Prothero.
Chief Secretary to Lord Lieutenant	£4425	Mr. Henry E. Duke.
Postmaster-General	£2500	Mr. Albert Illingworth.
Secretary for Scotland	£2000	Mr. Robert Monro.
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster	£2000	Sir Frederick Crawley.
First Commissioner of Works	£2000	Sir Alfred Mond.
Attorney General	£7000 and fees	Sir Frederick E. Smith.
Minister of Blockade	Unpaid	Lord Robert Cecil.
Minister of Labour	£2000	Mr. John Hodge.
Minister of Pensions	£2000	Mr. G. N. Barnes.
Minister of Food	£2000	Lord Devonport.
Minister of Shipping	£2000	Sir Joseph P. Maclay.

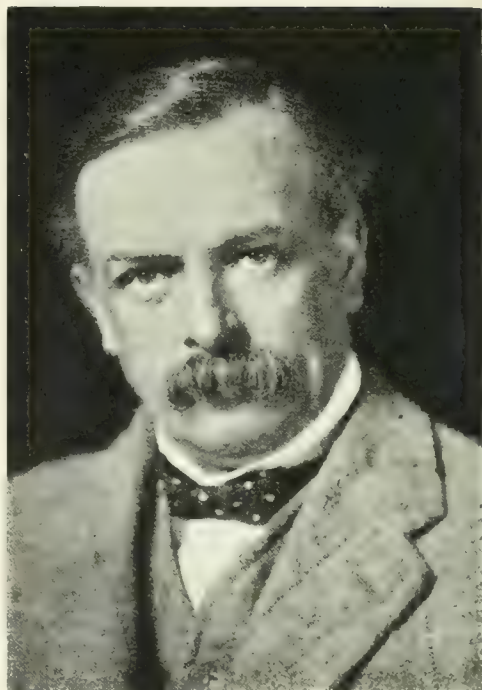
This ministry, or administration, was afterwards modified in detail before August, 1917. The changes were not due to internal dissensions, but to personal causes—except in the case of Mr. Henderson, who retired on August 11 for reasons which will be stated elsewhere. On July 17 Sir

Edward Carson, whose position at the Admiralty had become uneasy, resigned his office as First Lord and entered the War Cabinet. This body was reinforced by the addition of General Smuts. Sir Edward Carson was succeeded at the Admiralty by Sir Eric Geddes, who, after doing

valuable service on the lines of communication in France, in connection with the management of the railways, had been appointed Controller at the Admiralty. On July 10 Mr. Austen Chamberlain had considered himself bound in honour to resign the Indian Secretaryship as a result of the Mesopotamia Inquiry.¹

The retirement of Mr. Austen Chamberlain led to a modified reconstruction of the Ministry. Mr. Chamberlain was succeeded as Secretary of State for India by Mr. E. S. Montagu, who had been Minister of Munitions with Mr. Asquith, and had retired with him in December, 1916. Mr. Henderson resigned his place as member of the War Cabinet on August 11 in consequence of events which are dealt with later on. He was replaced by Mr. G. N. Barnes, then Minister of Pensions. Mr. J. Hodge, who at the time was Labour Minister, became Minister of Pensions. He was followed at the Labour Ministry by Mr. C. H. Roberts. On July 17, 1917, Dr. Addison vacated the Ministry of Munitions and was replaced by Mr. Winston Churchill. Dr. Addison then took the newly created Ministry of Reconstruction. Lord Devonport had been replaced at the Food Ministry by Lord Rhondda on June 15.

The final formation of the Ministry could not be at once effected. It was, for instance, necessary to pass a Bill providing for the creation of the Ministries of Labour, Food, and Shipping. It was the distinguishing feature of Mr. Lloyd George's adminis-



The Right Hon. David Lloyd George, Prime Minister
and First Lord of the Treasury
from a photograph by E. H. Mills

tration that it added largely to the functions of government, and had inevitably to increase the number of Government Departments and officials. The pressure of the war forced these innovations on the country. It will be observed that a high proportion of those whom Mr. Lloyd George called in to help him were men of business, not so far known in the political world.

The first task which presented itself to a Ministry formed to prosecute the war with vigour was to find the financial resources needed in all wars, but never on such a scale as in this one. Mr. Bonar Law began his career as Chancellor of the Exchequer and leader of the House of Commons by a striking success. The Great

Loan which was closed in February, 1917, reached the gigantic sum of £1,000,312,950 (including some £130,000,000 of converted Treasury Bills), and was subscribed for by 5,289,000 lenders. The number of subscribers shows that a large proportion of them must have come from the working classes. It slightly exceeded the stated number of applicants for the fourth German Loan of £538,000,000, which was 5,279,000, drawn from a far larger population than that of the British Isles.

The funds provided by the patriotism and confidence of the nation had to meet demands which were not only great but were constantly growing. The original estimates of revenue and expenditure for the financial year 1916-17 had been exceeded on both

sides. The first estimate for revenue had been £502,275,000. The actual amount obtained was £573,427,765. The figure for 1915-16 was £336,766,824. Nothing could be more satisfactory as a proof of the wealth of the nation. But the first estimate of expenditure for 1916-17 was £1,825,380,000. The actual outlay was £2,198,112,710. And this was to be compared with an expenditure for 1915-16 of £1,559,158,377. It will be seen, therefore, that if revenue grew in a satisfactory manner expenditure advanced by leaps and bounds. It is true that the actual outlay for 1916-17 was £38,473,290 below the latest estimate formed of what it would be, but the excess reached the figure of £372,732,710 beyond what had been calculated at the beginning of the financial year.

When Mr. Bonar Law introduced his first budget on May 2, 1917, he also showed that he was more hopeful than the results warranted. His estimate for 1917-18 was £2,290,381,000 for expenditure, and for revenue £638,600,000. He calculated that we would pay one-quarter of the cost of the war from revenue, which is more than any other belligerent (putting aside the United States, which were just entering into the war) could hope to do. Mr. Bonar Law then expected that the total amount of advances to be made by us to Allies and Dominions would be £400,000,000. A great part of this burden would, he thought, be taken over by the United States. Perhaps the prospect of this relief tended to render Mr. Bonar Law too optimistic, or perhaps he



Sir Eric Geddes, who succeeded Sir Edward Carson, First Lord of the Admiralty in the summer of 1917.
(From a photograph by Russell & Sons.)

relied on the income and super-income tax, and the excess-profits tax, to bear the country through. The first had sprung from £128,320,000 in 1915-16 to £205,032,000 in 1916-17. The second, which was only beginning to tell in the former financial year, had sprung to £139,920,000 in the second. However that may be, he did not impose new taxes, nor even make a serious addition to the old. The entertainment tax was increased on a scale ranging from 2*d.* on a payment of from 3*d.* to 6*d.*—up to 3*s.* on 15*s.*; and then 1*s.* on every 5*s.* beyond that limit. Tobacco was more highly taxed by the addition of another 1*s.* 10*d.* on the pound. The excess-profit tax was raised from 60 per cent to 80 per cent, and the increase was made retrospective from January 1, 1917.

1915-16.		1916-17.	
£4,820,000	.....	Daily average	..... £7,450,000
£1,490,000	.....	Advance to Allies	..... £2,000,000
£2,980,000	.....	Army, Navy, and Munitions	..... £4,900,000

The increase in the cost of munitions was happily due rather to the amount provided than to increase of cost.

The vote of credit asked for in May, 1917, was calculated to last till August. On July 24 the Chancellor of the Exchequer applied for another, and a larger, vote of credit—£650,000,000. This carried the total asked for since 1914 to the sum, which then appeared to be colossal but was soon to be eclipsed, of £5,292,000,000. On this occasion Mr. Bonar Law had to confess that, though the expenditure since the last vote of credit had fallen

On May 9 Mr. Bonar Law asked for a vote of credit for £500,000,000. Even at this early date he had to abate the hopefulness of his tone on Budget Day. The House and the country, which had then been assured that the daily cost of the war was £5,500,000, were now startled to hear that it was £7,450,000. The explanation of the discrepancy was that the lesser figure represented what we spent for ourselves, while the larger included advances to Allies. For the twenty-five days before Mr. Bonar Law spoke this charge had amounted to £2,000,000 a day. These advances would be repaid in time, but for the present the money must be found by us.

The progress of outlay can be easily demonstrated by figures.

during the later days of the period, when they were compared with the earlier, the average daily expenditure had still exceeded the Budget estimate by no less than one million sterling a day. He laid the facts candidly before the House:—

The average daily expenditure estimated for in the Budget was		£5,411,000
The total expenditure for these 112 days was		£6,795,000
An average excess of		£1,384,000

Let us see in what direction that excess has occurred. It has occurred in the items for:

Army, Navy, and the Muni- tions vote to the extent per day of	£506,000
Advances to Allies and Do- minions represent a daily increase of	£569,000
Miscellaneous items account for	£309,000
Making a total excess of ...	£1,384,000

The Chancellor of the Exchequer did not shrink from saying that he had been disappointed in his expectations of relief from the United States. But he argued that our obligation to aid Allies and Dominions was peremptory; that the advances made by us would be refunded in time; and that, as the Government had become a large purchaser of goods which it resold, it would again, in the course of time, recover its outlay with a profit. His defence was, of course, open to the reply that if he had taxed more boldly in May he would not have been under the same necessity to borrow in July. All borrowing brings an automatic, and long-lasting, increase in debt charges. It tends to inflation of currency which brings a rise in prices, and encloses the Treasury in a vicious circle. Yet the unwise course had certainly been followed by other nations, by Germany among them, and most of all by Russia, to a far greater extent than by the British Empire.

For the nation at large, and for every individual in it, all the financial and commercial influences tending to make whatever could be sold more difficult to obtain, and therefore dearer, had one universally-felt result—namely, a rise in the retail prices of goods, and more particularly of food. By

end of the third year of the war the average increase of the prices of food over those prevailing in July, 1914, was no less than 104 per cent. In some cases the increase was partly due to taxation. Thus, for instance, if granulated sugar, which had cost 2*d.* a lb. in 1914, was only to be bought at 6*d.* in August, 1917, the rise was to be accounted for to the extent of 1½*d.* by taxation. But the taxation was itself a consequence of the war. Whether one is hit by a fragment of a bomb, or by bricks which have been brought down by a bomb, the injury is equally due to the projectile. The pressure was sensibly felt by every householder. Fresh butter had gone up 65 per cent. Some parts of meat as much as 191 per cent. Bread by 109 per cent. Butter and margarine by 65 to 74 per cent.

A comparison between these figures and those given at the end of the second year of the war will show that prices had grown with increasing speed between August, 1916, and August, 1917. At the close of the second year it was estimated by the best-informed authorities at 22 per cent. At the close of the third, and after deducting that part of the whole augmentation which could be directly attributed to taxes, the figure was 75 per cent for a working-class family.

All who felt the sharp nip of higher prices for food were tempted to attribute their misfortune to the designs of evil men. And it is, indeed, difficult for the most temperate observer to be sure how far the evil was a necessary one. Much can be ac-

counted for satisfactorily. Without returning at length to the matter of the loss and diversion of tonnage, it must not be forgotten that when we lost the means to get access to the produce of the Antipodes, less food came into the market, and there was more competition, which entailed higher prices for what was to be obtained. Yet when all due allowance was made it did appear that more was demanded by sellers than was reasonable.

In the course of June, 1917, Lord Inchcape and Mr. Frank Houlder put certain figures before the Government for the purpose of showing that the

swollen prices could not be laid to the account of the shipowners. They pointed out that Australian beef could be, and was, sold at $4\frac{7}{8}d.$, and mutton at $5\frac{1}{8}d.$ per lb. When delivered on the quay in Great Britain the cost was only $6\frac{3}{8}d.$ and $6\frac{5}{8}d.$ per lb. Similar estimates were given for Argentine beef and mutton, and Patagonian lamb. They could be delivered on the quay at $6\frac{1}{11}d.$, $6\frac{1}{16}d.$, and $7\frac{1}{11}d.$ per lb. respectively. What, then, justified the high prices in the shops? By June, 1917, all had gone up on such scales as these. The price is for the stone of 8 lb.

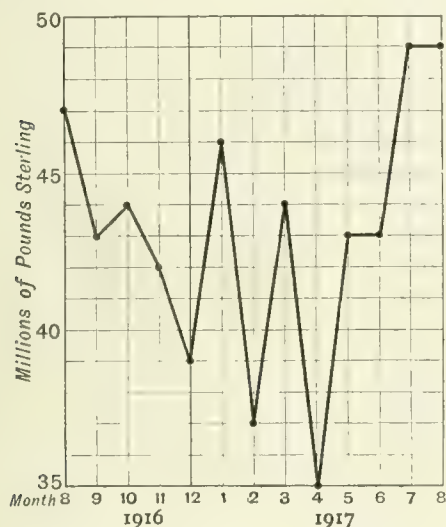
				1914.		1917.
Beef—Scotch Side	...	...	...	4s. 6d. to 5s. 2d.	...	10s. 8d. to 11s. 1d.
English	...	...	...	4s. 2d. to 4s. 5d.	...	10s. 3d.
American Chilled Forequarters	...	...	...	2s. 2d. to 2s. 4d.	...	7s. 3d.
Mutton—Scotch	...	...	...	6s. to 6s. 4d.	...	11s. 5d.
English	...	...	...	3s. 6d. to 4s.	...	11s. 1d.
Australian	...	...	...	2s. 2d. to 2s. 8d.	...	6s. 1d.
Lamb—English	...	...	...	5s. 8d. to 6s. 8d.	...	11s. 6d.
Scotch	...	...	...	6s. 3d. to 7s. 1d.	...	12s.
Australian	...	...	...	3s. 6d. to 4s.	...	7s.

Much was heard during these twelve months of the "profiteer"—a word invented early in the war and received into general use very quickly. When he was sought for the profiteer was found to be a very elusive offender. All the many kinds of persons engaged in the supply and sale of food were eager to come forward, and to show that each one of them was in his sphere innocent of all offence. Economic puzzles are ever especially hard to solve, because they are so complicated. Every thread in the vast web is directly or indirectly connected with every other, and what violently affects one does more or

less touch all. The problem became rapidly simplified in public estimation, and during the period we are now surveying the people of Great Britain were converted to a belief in the capacity of the Government to regulate prices, and then brought to insist that the State should discharge what was its duty. Since it had the power to do a public service, it was held to be clearly bound to undertake the task. The full results of this conversion to views which would have been repudiated with emphasis a few years ago, were not to be developed till the following year.

The necessity for hitherto unknown

machinery of administration to tackle an unprecedented need was felt by Mr. Asquith and his colleagues. On November 15, 1916, Mr. Runciman announced that a Food Controller was to be appointed and endowed with wide powers. We have seen that the Controllershship was erected into a fully organized Ministry after the ministerial crisis of December.



British Exports, August 1916 to August 1917 inclusive

The strenuous effort to keep down prices and secure supply began with the introduction to the inhabitants of Great Britain of a War Bread, which was to contain only 70 per cent of flour. On November 20 of the same year a maximum price was fixed for milk.

From the first day of 1917 the public found that there would be fewer trains to serve them, and that what there were would go more slowly. The transfer of much of the rolling stock to France, the reduction in the staffs, the growing difficulty in obtain-

ing coal all imposed a reduction of service. On the other hand, when brought under direct Government control, the Companies competed less and co-operated more. Nevertheless, it was to be found throughout the year that the obstruction put in the way of trade, and the consequent delay in delivery, or failure of supply, were not wholly due to lack of tonnage. There was always the disorganization first, and then the restriction of transport on shore, to be taken into account.

The course of trade during the third year of the war was of necessity subject to the same conditions as in the second. The rise in prices continued, and had its effect on the total figures of imports and exports. The sum, as expressed in money, bore a still higher ratio to the amount when given in bulk or quantity. When, for instance, we take the case of coal, we see that the export in January, 1916, reached 3,383,099 in tons, and in the same month of 1917 3,488,494. But the difference in price was as between £3,222,250 for 1916 and £4,588,227 for 1917. While the increase in bulk was one of 105,395 tons, it was connoted by £1,365,977 in money.

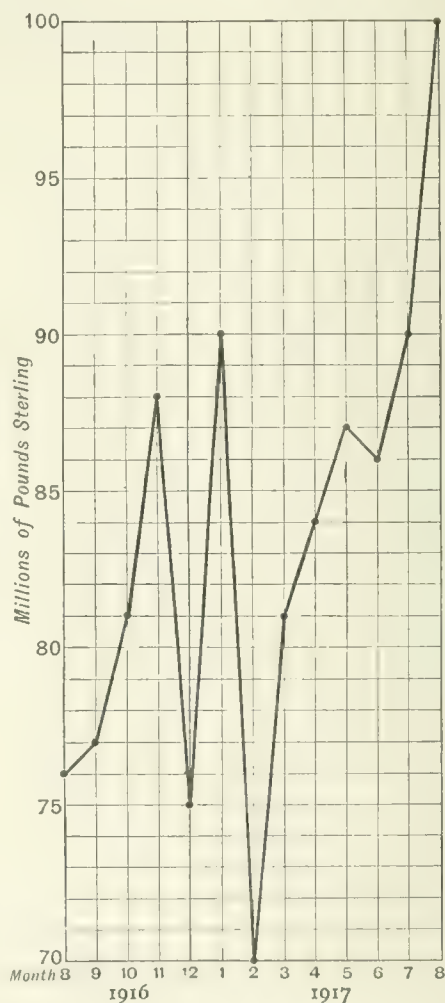
British exports had a tendency, though not a very marked one, to rise. The total of British exports for 1917 was £525,308,001, as against £506,279,707 in 1916. But we do not reach the same result if we take account of the foreign and colonial exports along with the British. The figure of total exports for 1916 was £603,845,885, and for 1917 it was £594,861,232. The difference is accounted for by the fact that foreign and

colonial re-exports suffered a sharp fall of from £97,566,178 in 1916 to £69,552,241 in 1917. The growth of imports in money value was relatively greater than that of exports. For the whole of the two years the figures were £948,506,492 in 1916, and £1,065,256,407 in 1917, so that while the increase in exports was £19,028,284, in imports the excess was £116,749,915. To put the facts in another way, which, however, shows their meaning more simply, and perhaps not less accurately—our exports in 1916 were more than half our imports, while in 1917 they were notably less than half. The very sharp drop which is to be noted in February, 1917, must be taken in connection with the first successes of the submarine campaign.

If these figures appear on the whole to be unfavourable, we must remember that the conditions did not permit a better result. When the bulk of our imports had been cut down to the indispensable minimum by restrictions and prohibitions it was not possible to reduce them any further. In exact proportion as we took less from abroad less was taken from us. The increase noted above was in price, not in bulk, and has to be accounted for by a variety of reasons. One of these has undoubtedly been inflation of currency. In that respect Great Britain had shown far more prudence than her enemies and most of her Allies. But the mistake had not been so completely avoided as the most competent authorities could wish.

The Government began to depart more and more from the economic

ideas of the reign of Queen Victoria. Its decision to fix the price of grain, taken in the first week of January, 1917, would have horrified the economists of the last generation. Wheat



British Imports, August 1916 to August 1917 inclusive

was fixed at 60s. a quarter of 504 lb. for the 1917 crop; oats were priced at 38s. 6d. per quarter of 336 lb. Potatoes in quantities of not less than 6 tons were to sell for 115s. per ton for delivery from September 15 to January 31; at 120s. in February and

March; at 130s. for the rest of the year. New orders restricting the use of wheat and sugar followed rapidly. A voluntary food campaign was promoted by Lord Devonport, and people were urged to restrict themselves as an alternative to a general rationing scheme.

It was in February, 1917, however, that the most striking proof was given of the change which the war had wrought in men's ideas. Mr. Lloyd George then introduced a scheme for the encouragement of the production of food at home. A minimum of 60s. a quarter was fixed for wheat in 1917; one of 55s. for 1918 and 1919; and 45s. for 1920, 1921, 1922. The object in providing for so far ahead was to give the grower security that he would not be robbed of the fruits of his outlay in a sudden fall in prices if he invested money in extended cultivation. The prices of oats were fixed at 38s. 6d. for 1917; 32s. 6d. for 1918 and 1919; and 24s. for 1920, 1921, 1922. A minimum price of £6 a ton was fixed for potatoes.

While steps were taken to increase production at home, precautions were not spared to reduce the bulk of imports so as to economize tonnage. The importation of several forms of goods was prohibited—as, for instance, apples, tomatoes, some raw fruits, aerated and table waters, coffee, and cocoa. Many were reduced by 25 per cent below the previous year's imports; and even Indian teas were to be brought in only to the extent of 75 per cent of their amount in 1913. Chinese teas were forbidden. The pressure on the food supply began to

be progressively felt after February, 1917, and the Government extended the fixing of maximum prices. British bacon was put at 150s. the cwt., and Irish at 140s.; Danish at 140s. On March 12 bread was ordered to be sold by weight only, and twelve hours after baking. With the object of securing supplies, Government obtained a vote of £18,000,000 from Parliament for the purchase of the Australian crop. The bargain did not prove profitable to the purchaser, for the lack of tonnage deprived the British Government of the means of bringing the harvest to Great Britain.

In the following March the public was called on to abstain from the use of potatoes—or rather, the more moneyed classes were asked to dispense with them, if not wholly, at least to a great extent, for the benefit of the poorer. As a matter of fact, potatoes were by no means easy to obtain in the interval before the new measures of encouragement began to take effect, and the town allotments, which were actively worked in leisure hours by townsmen, had begun to make their return. Orders against food-hoarding were issued on April 6, but an order issued on April 4, which came into operation on April 15, did most to bring home the necessities of the day to all His Majesty's subjects, at least in cities. On that day restrictions were placed on the number and quality of meals which might be served in hotels, and restaurants were subject to strict regulation. Potatoes, for the time being, were to be served only twice a week. A meatless day

The Great World War

was imposed—Tuesday for London, and Wednesday for other parts of the

United Kingdom. The amount to be provided was limited to:—

		Meat.		Sugar.		Bread.		Flour.
Breakfast ...	...	2 oz.	...	$\frac{2}{3}$ oz.	...	2 oz.	...	nil.
Midday Meals ...	...	5 oz.	...	$\frac{2}{3}$ oz.	...	2 oz.	...	1 oz.
Dinner ...	...	5 oz.	...	$\frac{2}{3}$ oz.	...	2 oz.	...	1 oz.
Tea ...	...	nil.	...	$\frac{2}{3}$ oz.	...	2 oz.	...	nil.

Minute rules were made to fix the equivalents of poultry and meat, bread, and flour. Certain concessions were made—as, for example, that meatless days would not be enforced in places where no meal was served of the value of more than 1s. 3d.

While prices were rising, and supply was becoming more difficult, it was inevitable that wages would grow insufficient if they remained at the old scale. Before the end of 1916 demands for a rise in wages were put forward, and they continued to be made, and to be enforced by threats to strike. In September of that year a 10s. increase was insisted on by the workers, and it was to be observed that the demand was generally accompanied by a call for Government regulation of prices. After somewhat angry negotiations a compromise was effected. It was decided that the war bonus of 5s. already conceded should be raised to 10s., and that the 2s. 6d. given to workers under 18 years of age should be doubled also. But this did not, and perhaps could not, prove a permanent settlement. The miners in South Wales demanded a rise of 15 per cent in December. The boiler-makers at Liverpool, who had asked for 10s. and had been awarded 3s., handed in their notices, and it is to be observed that they defied the Defence

of the Realm Act. In March, 1917, a strike which suspended the production of munitions took place at Barrow.

Wages and supply acted and reacted on one another all through the year. On April 30 the Government decided to encourage the cultivation of food-stuffs by giving a subvention to producers in the form of a grant to cover the difference between the actual market value and the minimum price fixed—a measure which in the end cost the Treasury £40,000,000. It also regulated the rate of agricultural wages, and forbade the raising of rents.

Proposals to make peace, and even formal negotiations, have often gone on for years beside the most strenuous military operations. The Great World War has been no exception. Apart from mere talk, which was mainly fantastic, the third year of the struggle was diversified by what was known as "the Peace Offensive". The name stands for an attempt on the part of the Central Powers to obtain at least a good part of what they were fighting for without further loss of life or effort of a military order. Much was said on all sides as to the real meaning of events which occurred just before, or contemporaneously with, the outbreak of hostilities. But this may be left aside as being irrelevant to the issue,

which is not who was responsible for the war, but whether it could be stopped by mutual agreement at the end of 1916 or beginning of 1917.

The immediate pretext for the German move was found in Sir E. Grey's declaration at a luncheon given to the Foreign Press Association that Germany had provoked the war, or per-



Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg, German Chancellor

haps even more directly, in his message to ex-President Taft. On this occasion the British Foreign Minister had expressed his readiness to co-operate in the formation of a league of nations for the maintenance of peace. The German Chancellor, Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg, retorted by a speech in the Reichstag, in which he scoffed at the British Minister's proposal of a league of nations as being only a device to confirm the supremacy of Great Britain on the sea. Nevertheless, his Govern-

ment saw the advantage it might gain by professing a desire for peace. There was a possibility that the Allies might be divided, and, in any case, public opinion in Germany would be soothed. On December 12, 1916, therefore, the German Government sent a note to the Government of the United States, in which it proposed, not a definite basis of peace, but the summoning of a conference, before which it undertook to put proposals such as could not fail to be acceptable.

Those who were more desirous to win peace than to reach it by safe measures, would have been glad to see the offer accepted. But the Allied Governments would not open negotiations in such conditions. In a note dated December 30, they all, without exception, refused to take the Chancellor's offer seriously. The document was somewhat long, and was not free from repetitions. The substance of it was that an offer to meet in conference was not one to make peace; that before discussion could even begin with the Central Powers they must give a definite security that they would make reparation for the wrong they had done; that their present offer was too obviously meant to divide the Allies, to put themselves in the position of having made a magnanimous offer, which, however, bound them to nothing; and to serve as an excuse when they were disposed to take new and barbarous measures to impose their will on the rest of the world.

This reply was blamed by some, and called a slamming of the door in the face of peace. It was in reality a

refusal to surrender. The Central Powers claimed that their economic strength had been shown to be capable of resisting all pressure, while their military position was that of conquerors. They affected a tone of magnanimity. The reply of the Allies was that both claims were unfounded, and that they would not treat as the defeated side when they felt confident of ultimate victory. Their case was vigorously stated abroad and at home—notably by Mr. Balfour at the Mansion House, on June 16, 1917, after his return from his American mission; by Mr. Lloyd George at Glasgow, on June 29; by Mr. Balfour once more at the London Guildhall, on July 14; and then by Mr. Lloyd George at the Belgian National Fête at the Queen's Hall, on July 27.

In Germany the Chancellor, von Bethmann-Hollweg, was driven from office in the summer by the military party, and was succeeded by Dr. Michaelis. The Reichstag seized the opportunity to pass a resolution in favour of peace. It was but a mere verbose version of the note of the previous December. The new Chancellor himself avowed that he could not understand what it meant. The Peace Party in Great Britain thought that they knew better than the Chancellor. They promoted a debate in the House of Commons on July 27. The result could only be that the barren ground was covered yet again. Mr. Bonar Law pointed out that the Reichstag was not the German Government, and asked what definite promise it had given? Mr. Asquith put the case in a nutshell when he said that the Allies

were fighting for freedom, not only now, but for all time to come. Their only security would be the defeat of Germany. The Germans, including the Reichstag itself, wished to negotiate as conquerors. To accept their offer would be to acknowledge defeat.

The third year of the war was



Dr. Michaelis, who succeeded Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg as German Chancellor in the summer of 1917

brought to its fitting close by King George's annual greetings to his Allies and his subjects, expressing renewed confidence that the joint efforts of the countries associated in the struggle against military despotism would be crowned with final success, "thus setting upon a firm foundation for the future the laws of nations and the welfare of humanity".

CHAPTER XV

THE FRENCH FRONT IN THE LATTER
HALF OF 1917

Insurance against the Consequences of the Russian Defection—Purpose of the Fourth Battle of Verdun—General Guillaumat—German Positions and Defences East of the Meuse—French Air-craft and Artillery Work—Attack in a Mist—Immediate Success of the Assault West and East of the Meuse—Development of the Victory—German Counter-attacks—Results of the Battle—Von Kühne's Tactics and Failure—The French Position at the West End of the Chemin-des-Dames—A Military Problem—The Malmaison Position: Plateaux, Quarries, and Ravines—Tasks of the French Sectors of Assault—The French Offensive—Triumphant Result of the Malmaison Action.

ON the French front in the later months of 1917, as on the British, the actions taken were a species of insurance against the certain incidence, though the uncertain extent, of a forthcoming German offensive raised to a high power by the release of forces from defaulting Russia. That default of an ally for whom many sacrifices had been made was to produce in 1917 a new situation on the Italian front, which threatened to involve the Allies in a disaster of the first magnitude. The action of Byng's army, and the sequel at Cambrai, dealt with in a subsequent chapter, may be regarded, like the continuation of the costly Passchendaele offensive, as typical of the British attempt at an insurance by preventing the release of further German forces for a reinforced attack south of the Alps. The actions of the French at Verdun and Malmaison on the Chemin-des-Dames ridge were insurances effected with a still more far-sighted end, namely, that of providing against the inevitable German reactions of 1918.

As events turned out, the effect of

the victory gained at Malmaison was submerged in the volume of the German onslaught which swept the French away from the Chemin-des-Dames in the following year, almost before the weight and purpose of Ludendorff's design was grasped. As at Cambrai, the insurance premium was not high enough. Nevertheless, that which was done was sufficient to take the edge off the German sword; and the positions gained by the French at Moronvilliers, the battle for which has already been described, as well as those won in the Fourth Battle of Verdun, now to be related, prevented the further extension of the German attack, and eventually converted it into a retirement.

The work done at Verdun may be described in one sentence as an attempt to finish the work done on the east side of the Meuse, according to General Nivelle's dispositions, by throwing back the Germans to the positions occupied by them on the west side of the river before the First Battle of Verdun began. This task, and the importance of it, were little appreciated in Great Britain at that

time, because British eyes were turned towards Sir Douglas Haig's continued attacks on the Flanders ridges. But the Germans were not unaware of the French intentions, or unprepared for them, as may be gathered from Army Orders issued through General von Gallwitz, commanding the German Fourth Army in front of Verdun, and by General von Dietrichs, a Divisional Commander.

Von Gallwitz was convinced as early as the middle of August, 1917, of the French intention to attack. Opposed to von Gallwitz was General Guillaumat, who had been obliged to mark time at Verdun since the French offensives there which threw back the Germans beyond Douaumont and Vaux and Bezonvaux in 1916. General Nivelle's schemes in the spring of 1917 had left no forces to spare for any offensive at Verdun. But now he was given men and material; and with him collaborated, as supervisor, General Fayolle, the originator of the French artillery time barrage. In infantry Guillaumat was supplied by General Pétain, the Commander-in-Chief of the group of French armies, with a force equivalent to that opposed to him under von Gallwitz, and with a superiority of artillery. To this was added superiority in air-craft.

The combination of artillery and air-craft proved very successful in wrecking the wire entanglements, concrete shelters, and other devices, perniciously familiar along all the lines of defence which the Germans had drawn from the Argonne to the sea. The battles of Verdun were so prolonged that nearly everybody in west-

ern Europe must have become familiar with the positions occupied by the Germans both before and after the struggle for this vital point began. When Guillaumat's plans were ripening, the German positions on the west of the Meuse extended in a very shallow semicircle, its convexity towards the north, from Avocourt and the Bois d'Avocourt over Hill 304, with Le Mort Homme farther south-west behind it, thence dipping in a small salient between hills before reaching back to cover Cumières, the Bois de Cumières, the Bois de Corbeaux, and the Côte de l'Oie (or Goose Hill) farther behind and nearer the Meuse. The line then went straight to the river. On the other bank, the Côte de Talou, in the bend of the river, was German; but south of this the French line was drawn in front of Vacherauville, the Côte de Poivre, or Pepper Hill, Louvemont, the Bois de Caurières, and Bezonvaux. It then ran sharply back almost to the south, above the plain of the Woëvre, and occupying what is comprehensively called the Heights of the Meuse.

Von Gallwitz's position in face of a probable French attack was not wholly a happy one. As a defensive position the German lines suffered the defect of being cut by the Meuse and a canal, so that troops could not be transferred from the eastern and western sectors except over bridges under French fire; the hills on the west of the Meuse were of considerable altitude, and were bereft of trees; moreover, the slopes of Hill 304 and Mort Homme were separated from their northern companions by the valley of the Forges.

All these considerations made it impracticable for the German commander to keep his front trenches lightly manned, and to depend on the rapid bringing up of reserves in face of an attack. He was obliged to keep the bulk of his troops between Avo-court Wood and the Meuse in first-line trenches and redoubts. Finally, Hill 304 and the Mort Homme position, mutually interdependent, were separated by the Esnes brook, and had to be strongly defended individually. They could not be given up by an "elastic retirement" because that would imply the uncovering of further positions east of the Meuse; and a retirement on a larger scale both east and west of the Meuse was not to be thought of, both because of its moral consequences, and because the French must on all accounts be prevented from emerging farther from Verdun.

If the Germans were ever to enforce a decision on the Western Front, as they hoped to be able to do in 1918, they must pin the French to Verdun. The converse of that proposition was afterwards perceptible in September, 1918, when Marshal Foch, as a preliminary to making use of Verdun as a sally-port, enlarged his Verdun front by cutting off the St. Mihiel salient on the eastern side of the Meuse. Before the last battle of Verdun in 1917, the German line, as held by von Gallwitz, after crossing the Meuse from the west at Cumières, ran up and along the Talou and Poivre heights, and, threading the woods of Fosse, Chaume, and Caurières, reached Bezonaux. Thence bent back south,

it outlined the feet of the Meuse heights till St. Mihiel was reached. Opposite these lines the Germans had constructed their customary defences, strongest on the western side, where, in addition to concrete pill-boxes and redoubts, were tunnels like those at Moronvilliers. The Bismarck Tunnel connected the two summits of the Mort Homme position (Hills 265 and 295), and the Crown Prince Tunnel, 800 feet long, ran behind it. There were other such places. The roads were broken by pits, gas cylinders, anti-tank guns; emplacements for no fewer than 400 batteries were among the devices which the Germans had evolved and perfected to make their positions secure.

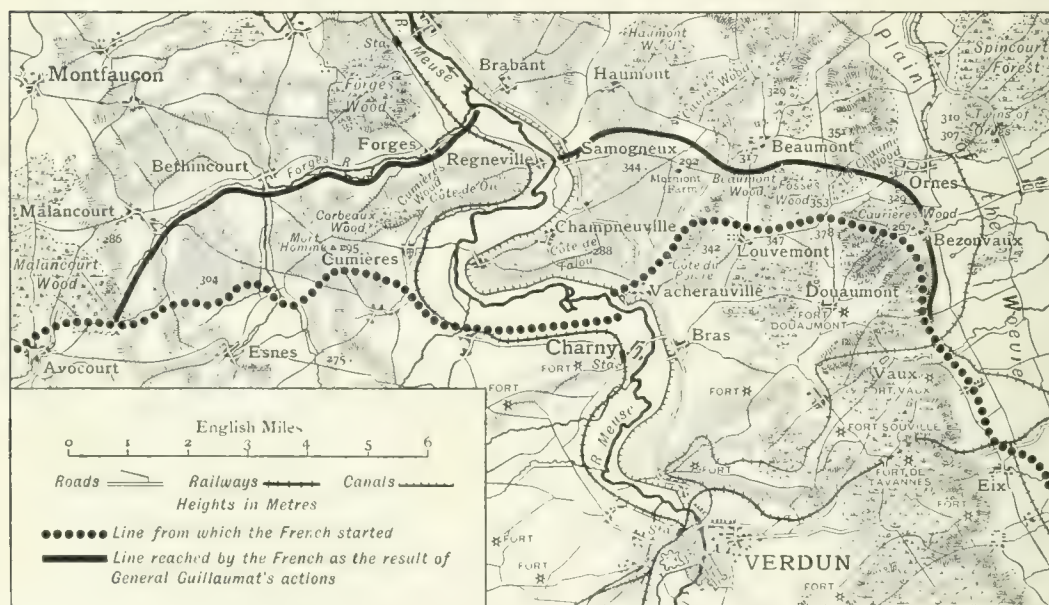
The Germans taught their adversaries many lessons in this art of field fortifications, but the adversaries matched the instruction by lessons in the use of air-craft and artillery. The air-craft furnished the French with material for maps on which every emplacement, entanglement, and redoubt was marked; the French 16-inch howitzers and 15-inch guns flung shells on every German target, till, on the Mort Homme, not a blade of grass was left. The shell-holes overlapped, and a shell from a large howitzer had killed 150 men in the Crown Prince Tunnel.

General Franiatte was the French artillery commander. He did his work with care, and rounded it off with prodigious quantities of gas-shells. On the other hand, the superiority of the French air-craft work had kept the Germans from investigating with corresponding accuracy and damage

the French approaches to the front from which Guillaumat's attack was to be delivered. General Franiatte's long preliminary bombardments culminated in a sustained drum-fire, which began on the still evening of an August Sunday and continued till the thick misty dawn of August 20.

The mist, rendered thicker by the

assaulted but "cupped" on either side) had been approached on the eastern side by the French 31st Division (General Martin), which overthrew von Dietrich's Prussians and sent them in disorder back towards Hills 295 and 265 of the Mort Homme, where some 800 were subsequently captured in the Crown Prince Tunnel.



Map illustrating the Operations at Verdun, August-October, 1917

smoke barrage, helped the French, and in an hour and a half after the infantry had left their trenches they had reached the parts marked out for them. Their attack spread like a flame from the extreme west, where, before five o'clock in the morning, they began clearing Avocourt Wood. This capture enabled the divisions on their right to go forward without peril to the western face of Hill 304, where the divisions joined hands. Meanwhile, Hill 304 (not to be directly

Von Dietrich's division was wiped out, and Hill 304, with French divisions on either side of it, was out-flanked.

Nearer to the river the French Foreign Legion (Colonel Rollet), which had done so well at Moronvilliers, was sent by Guillaumat (himself a Foreign Legion commander of former days) to take Cumières and the Corbeaux Wood. They did all that was asked of them, and more, for they reached the line of the Forges

River. These two attacks had beaten the wind out of the Germans, who could not rise to a counter-attack till late in the evening.

While these attacks were being made on the west of the river the French were enlarging on the east side the territory which Nivelles and Mangin had won for them the year before. Here they wanted the Talou Ridge in the loop of the Meuse, the summit (Hill 344) of the Poivre Ridge, and Hill 240, north of Louvemet. The possession of these three heights would help to clear a way for a better front facing on Beaumont and Ornes, which was whence the German attack on Verdun, eighteen months before, had been projected. The task set was done. The French 126th Division (General Matthieu), with the help of an artillery barrage which left the enemy's guns outclassed, drove the Germans from the Talou Ridge and the river loop. On Matthieu's right, part of the 123rd Division (General St. Marmont) took Hill 344; and farther to the right still the 168th Division (General Caron) and the 42nd Division (General Deville) stormed Hill 240, and laid the foundations for the capture of Fosses and Chaume Woods.

The tactical gains of the day were thus eminently satisfactory. The material emblems of the success were 5000 unwounded prisoners, including 116 officers. The German *communiqué*, unable otherwise to explain the defeat, attempted to embitter the victors by describing it as a thrust which the French army had conducted at England's command, and sneered at a

small local success against which was to be set a "failure of an attack on a front of 12 miles".

General Guillaumat proceeded to enlarge this so-called "failure". On August 21 he consolidated his new-won positions and held off attacks to the north-east (Fosses Wood), and for two further days battered Hill 304 and held off reinforcements for it by a steady barrage. The position of the German defenders was unenviable, for as the French got guns up the Mort Homme positions they brought an increasing fire from a new direction on to the flanks of Hill 304. The Germans found it untenable, and said so in their *communiqué*. At any rate they relinquished it in face of a bustling attack by the French on the morning of the 24th, and with it went a number of extras in the way of defences north of it. These French gains, which were the prize of General Linder's division, took them to the Forges brook between Malancourt and Bethincourt. Before daybreak the next morning General Corvisart's troops on Linder's right had stretched the cord from the Mort Homme, so that no German troops stood on the south of the Forges. The redoubts close to Bethincourt were the last to be stormed. The captures up to this point reached the figure of 8100, which seems insignificant by comparison with the totals that August, 1918, was to produce, but was greater than the garnerings of many victories of which we were then rightly proud.

The operations of the succeeding fortnight were transferred to the eastern bank of the Meuse, where the

French front stood in need of further extension, if their gains on the western side were to be safeguarded. Fosses Wood must be taken, and the ruins of Beaumont, which had been converted into a wasp's nest of machine-guns, must be smoked out. All this and other work had to be done piecemeal; the opportunity of walking into such positions after blasting them with high-explosives vanishes with the diminishing momentum of a push. All that can be hoped for is to burst a way in by superior fighting ability, and to hope to repel counter-attacks by the same quality. The divisions of Caron and Deville on the 26th took the whole of Fosses Wood and Beaumont Wood, and the French barrage threw back the counter-attack which von Gallwitz sent forward from the wood behind Beaumont ruins. The total of prisoners had mounted to 10,000; but now the weather broke, and, in face of the considerations which have just been suggested, further operations were postponed till September 8.

On that day General Passaga's army corps, with relief divisions under Monroe and Riberpray (who had done so well at Moronvilliers) were sent forward in an attack between Beaumont and the Caurières Wood, a short front of about a mile and a half. Guillaumat's wish was to capture a hill called the Caurières Spur, which overlooks the twin hills of Ornes, whence the heaviest German guns ushered in the First Battle of Verdun. These twin hills form the north-east barrier to the plain of the Woëvre. In the centre Passaga

was to advance to Azannes, half-way to Ornes, where the road between Ornes and Beaumont might be cut. Von Gallwitz divined Guillaumat's intentions, which, indeed, were quite obvious, and threw in all the men he could bring up to resist the advance. Mist gave the French a good opportunity, and Riberpray's division burst through Chaume Wood and took the Caurières Spur. Their prisoners, 800, were fewer than the German dead who were killed in the counter-attack of the night of September 8-9.

Undeterred by failure, von Gallwitz launched a more ambitious counter-attack on Sunday, September 9, designed to imperil the French position by capturing Hill 344, a spur of the Poivre Height, and, with this as lever, to re-take the Talou Ridge. The attack was met hand-to-hand by some of the most seasoned French troops, Bretons of General Hennoque's division, and General Philipot's "Aces",¹ and after a fierce struggle it ended in a costly German failure. Von Gallwitz nevertheless sent in further counter-attacks on the ground won by Riberpray and Monroe. The result was the same, and by this time (September 10) Hindenburg's Chief of Staff, Ludendorff, had found it necessary to come to von Gallwitz's head-quarters. Von Gallwitz retired in favour of General von Kühne. That fact is the best commentary on the upshot of the battle, and was far more indicative of the truth than the fanciful German *communiqués* of that date.

¹ An "Ace" division was one in which every regiment had the right to wear a special decoration.

These operations ended the Fourth Battle of Verdun. The French had recovered Hill 304 and the Mort Homme, on which enough blood had flowed to submerge these heights. They had advanced to the south bank



Field-Marshal von Hindenburg and General von Ludendorff leaving their Head-quarters

of the Forges, and were on that side of the Meuse almost on the line occupied by him before the First Battle of Verdun began on February 21, 1916. On the eastern bank of the Meuse they had not cancelled the German gains to the same extent.

General Guillaumat was in front of Ornes, but he was still south of Beaumont, and north of Samogneux he was 2 miles short of the old French lines of early 1916. He still had not advanced into the Woëvre. But, as already has been observed, he had effected a considerable reinsurance, and its value became perceptible when, in the first week of September a year later, the Americans, under General Pershing, reduced the St. Mihiel salient farther south of the same eastern heights of the Meuse and converted the Verdun front into a new and dangerous menace. In 1917 such operations were not possible, nor could Guillaumat be given the men to pursue his operations further. The first Americans were then only arriving in France, and the German divisions fresh from Riga and the Eastern front were yet to be encountered.

Von Kühne was naturally not satisfied to take over the position from von Gallwitz without an attempt to improve it. West of the Meuse he attempted little, because the German lines were not further threatened. But the French thrust towards the twin hills of Ornes at the edge of the Woëvre plain was a standing menace. These hills were lower than some which General Guillaumat had captured south of them, but they were the pivot of the German defence, as they had been the pivot of the first German assault, and must be rendered secure. Von Kühne's first effort was therefore directed to dislodging the French from the salient in front of these pillars.

The first attack was made on Sep-

tember 11; another on September 14; a third on September 24. The last of these assaults was the most furious, and on the largest scale. The fact that all three were delivered at the same narrow sector of less than 2 miles, and that the last of them left 121 prisoners behind it, is the best commentary on their failure. On Monday, October 1, the Germans again attacked the eastern face of the Ornes salient between the Chaume Wood and Bezonvaux, and for a week von Kühne continued to launch intense attacks on narrow fronts in order to drive the French off Hill 344. The "successes" attained were visible only in the German bulletins: Hill 344 remained in French hands, and the salient was not materially reduced. The same commentary can be made on German attacks renewed on October 21, October 23 (the date of the battle of Malmaison on the Chemin-des-Dames), the 25th and 26th; and November 1 and November 7 and 10. Between August 20 and November 10, first von Gallwitz and afterwards von Kühne had used twenty-four German divisions in the Verdun sector. Von Gallwitz had been superseded; von Kühne had done nothing more to redeem his predecessor's failure there, at a very great cost of life, than capture a few trenches on the northern slopes of Hill 344 and at the Chaume Wood.

General Nivelle's plan for the French spring offensive had left the greater part of the bastion of the Chemin-des-Dames in French hands. The cost had been great, too great

for those who believed in 1917 that it was the first business of French generals to *ménager les hommes*, and owing to insufficient artillery preparation the assault on the sector east of the Chemin-des-Dames, between Craonne and Rheims, had been a failure, though it was here that the greatest results should have been achieved had the plan gone well. It seems now, when the situation is surveyed in the light of later knowledge, that General Nivelle would have done better to design his assault with a more concentrated weight and forethought, so as to make sure of the western end of the Chemin-des-Dames, and to use this gain as the pivot for further attacks. When the greater plan which he had made was abandoned, and General Nivelle gave place to General Pétain (and General Foch), it became the task of French commanders to improve upon the incomplete gains here as at Moronvilliers, and, as has just been narrated, at Verdun. In short, the latter part of 1917 was devoted by the French to patchwork, and to the Pétain method of limited objectives.

The results were not spectacular, except to the military mind, which will always see in the encounters in front of Verdun, at Moronvilliers, and at that section of the Chemin-des-Dames ridge known as Malmaison, classic examples of abstruse military problems undertaken and carried out with economy and finish. That at Malmaison was the most difficult of the three, though in the course of subsequent events it seemed to have served the least purpose. The value of the



General Sir Herbert Plumer G.C.B.



Kaiser Transport on the Western Coast, towing war boats to the French fighting zone

gains at Verdun became evident in September, 1918; those at Malmaison were equally perceptible because they enabled General Gouraud, in July, 1918, to repel the German assault which was to have flowed past both sides of Rheims, but which, being held up on the eastern side, was afterwards exposed to the lethal blow aimed by General Foch at its western flank. But the barrier of the Chemin-des-Dames, captured and held by the French with such vigour and tenacity in 1917, was submerged by the Germans in a rush in the second blow they struck at General Foch's armies. In spite of this disappointment the Chemin-des-Dames had served its turn. It had been, like other actions, an insurance against the inevitable German "hammer-stroke" on the Western Front; and, though it was lost, its barrier had been an obstacle which Ludendorff had to take into consideration in planning the German offensive. If the French had not been there, the Crown Prince's army might have been set in motion at the same time that the effort was made to divide the British and French armies by the stroke towards Amiens. As it was, the German blow was struck here after the Amiens thrust had exhausted its momentum. In short, the Chemin-des-Dames played its part in chopping up the German offensive of 1918 into separated efforts.

After General Nivelle had stationed the French on the Chemin-des-Dames ridge in April-May, 1917, the Germans never ceased to dispute the possession of the hog's back. On the 18-miles front no fewer than forty-nine

German divisions were engaged and withdrawn in the following three and a half months. The ridge was in places less than 200 yards across, and both sides employed immense numbers of guns, so that the struggles for this or that patch of ground were conducted in a fury of exploding shells. From August 20 to October 23 there were seldom more than a few days' intermission in the struggles for caves, for quarries, for plateaux, or for the high narrow point of the Hurtebise spur, where once stood a monument to a Napoleonic victory. The limestone of the Chemin-des-Dames was like a Gruyère cheese, so numerous were the caves, the quarries, the hidden galleries beneath its surface.

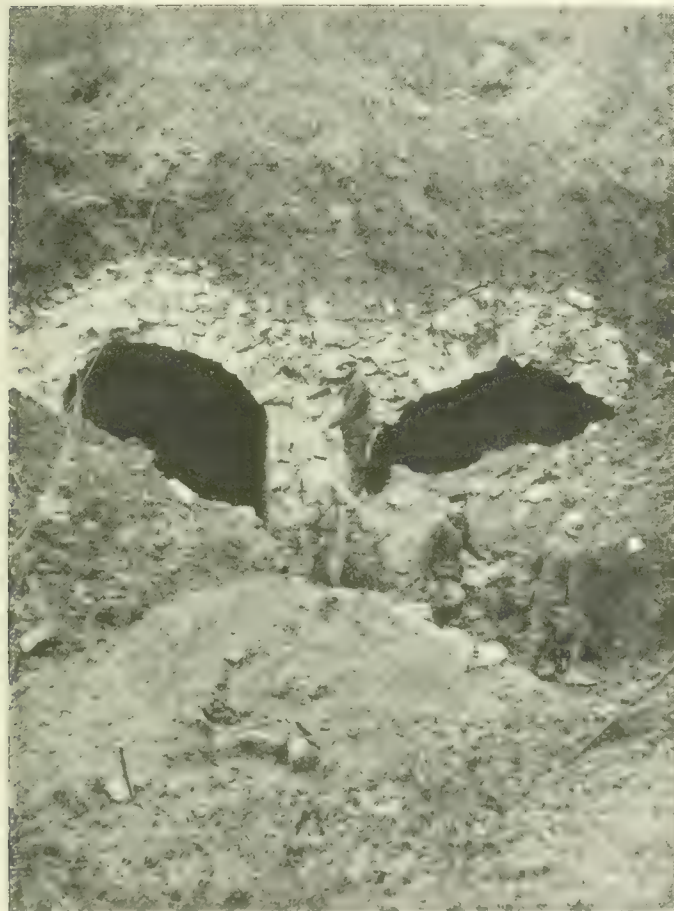
The greater number of these, stretching from the river north of the western end of the Chemin-des-Dames ridge at Vauxaillers to the Chevreigny Spur, were in German hands. Between these two points, and nearer to the Chevreigny Spur, was the dismantled fort of Malmaison, which gave its name to the action fought by the French for the possession of this vital buttress of the ridge. The principal quarry here was that of Montparnasse, which had an area of several acres and could shelter a brigade. It was north of the Fort de Malmaison, which stood on a plateau. South of the fort was the Bohery quarry. When the French assault was made the German engineers were joining up these three obstacles by underground galleries. The French attack anticipated the completion of this scheme, but the defences of the German position were formidable enough without them.

French artillery of the heaviest kind reduced them in great measure, wrecking the galleries of the Fort de Malmaison, and even piercing the great thickness of the roof of the Montparnasse quarry; but the elaborately

Singes, and along the summit of the plateau above Laffaux to Laffaux Mill. Thence they went eastwards in front of the Fruty quarry to the southern edge of La Malmaison Farm, and, covering the Bohery quarry and La

Malmaison Fort, wound along the summit of the plateau to the Chevreigny spur. This was the German holding which the French must take; there were several other enemy possessions of a smaller and more precarious tenure farther east along the ridge. The position was shaped like an oak leaf on a twig, with ravines between the serrations, often wooded, and not to be completely swept by gun-fire.

The ravines would have to be fought for by soldiers, not by guns alone. Two of such ravines were those of Allemant and Laffaux-Pinon. The Vauxaillon valley narrowed to a ravine; there were others, known as the St. Guillain ravine and the Bois-de-la-Garenne on the northern side of the position, which



After its Bombardment by the French Bombardment. French troops searching Fort Malmaison, captured by General Maistre in October, 1917.

organized lines running up from the valley of the Ailette to and about the western spurs of the Chemin-des-Dames ridge were obstacles that might have paralysed the enterprise of any but the skilful French mind.

The triple lines ran up the Mont des

was further fenced by another line of support trenches. The French could not turn this position by proceeding by way of the valley of the Ailette, for the Mont des Singes fortifications would have remained at their flank and back: it had to be taken frontally;

and it is fairly clear that General von Müller, the German commander who held it, thought that this could not be done. Like a prudent soldier, however, he neglected no precaution, and he had been given seven divisions in front line and reserves for its defence.

General Maistre, to whom the task



General Maistre, commanding the French Troops in the Battle for Malmaison, October, 1918
(From a photograph by R. Meley)

of evicting von Müller's divisions from the caverned plateaux of the four spurs to be reduced, had, as a coadjutor, General Franchet d'Esperey, who knew the region intimately, and something more than three army corps.

Of these General Marjoulet, with the 14th Corps, embraced the largest sector, from Moisy Farm, below Vauxaillon, to Mennejain Farm, due south of Allemant village. He had to capture Laffaux Mill and get on to the

plateau by Allemant, taking Fruty quarry in his stride. When that was done he was to use Allemant as a pivot for attacking part of the big German support trench on the northern slopes.

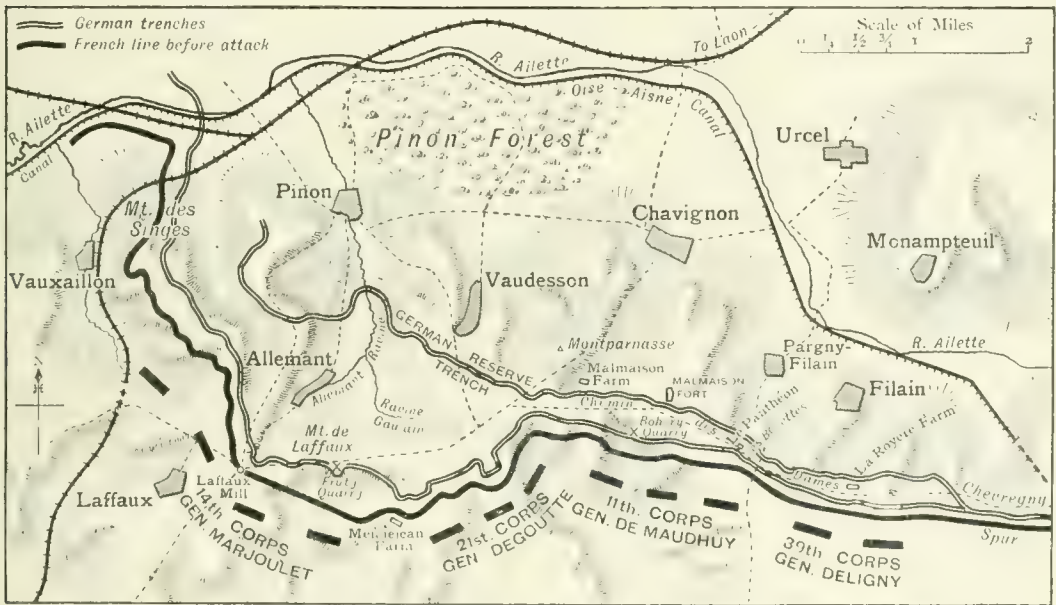
The 21st Corps under General Degoutte was in effect the French centre. It had to master the complex German defences at the south-western end of the Malmaison plateau, pass on up the ravines to Malmaison Farm, and ultimately descend to the Montparnasse quarry and towards Chavignon. General Degoutte's army was to advance farther north than the left army corps under Marjoulet.

On Degoutte's right was General de Maud'huy with the 11th Army Corps (General Guyot de Salins with the African Division, and General Brissaud-Desmaillet with the Alpine Chasseurs). The African division was to take the Bohery quarry, Malmaison Fort, and finally the eastern end of Chavignon. The Chasseurs, who were joined on their right by part of the troops of the 39th Division (General Deligny) had as difficult a task as any. They were to expel the 5th Division of the Prussian Guard from the eastern end of the Malmaison plateau.

The battle for Malmaison was one of the kind which, after the events of 1918, would be called of the old-fashioned type. There was the long, searching bombardment, which was necessitated by the heavily defended and difficult nature of the positions to be assaulted, and could not be replaced by the short bombardments, the multiple tank assaults, and the

surprise movements of open warfare. In this action artillery opened the door. The infantry's part was to push through it and break the hinges, so that it could not again be shut. The guns from October 20 to October 23 deluged the German positions with explosives and gas-shells on a scale which even in this

large, and the plateau north of it were carried, but there were several hitches and a good deal of severe fighting before Marjoulet's programme was carried through. Carried through it was, none the less, and it laid the foundations of the complete success of the design. Marjoulet had captured 3000 prisoners, as well as the position



Diagrammatic Map illustrating General Maistre's Attack on the Western Spur of the Chemin des Dunes, October, 1917.

war of projectiles had not then been reached. The defences were in places pulverized, their defenders stifled, and barrages which hardly intermitted kept off reinforcements and renewed supplies.

Nevertheless, when Marjoulet on October 24 set his troops of the right wing in motion, there were plenty of German nests of guns untouched, and many first-rate German soldiers not too dispirited to fight. The Laffaux position, Allemant vil-

lage, and the plateau north of it were assigned to him, and had wheeled round on Allemant to join and help Degoutte's corps in the centre.

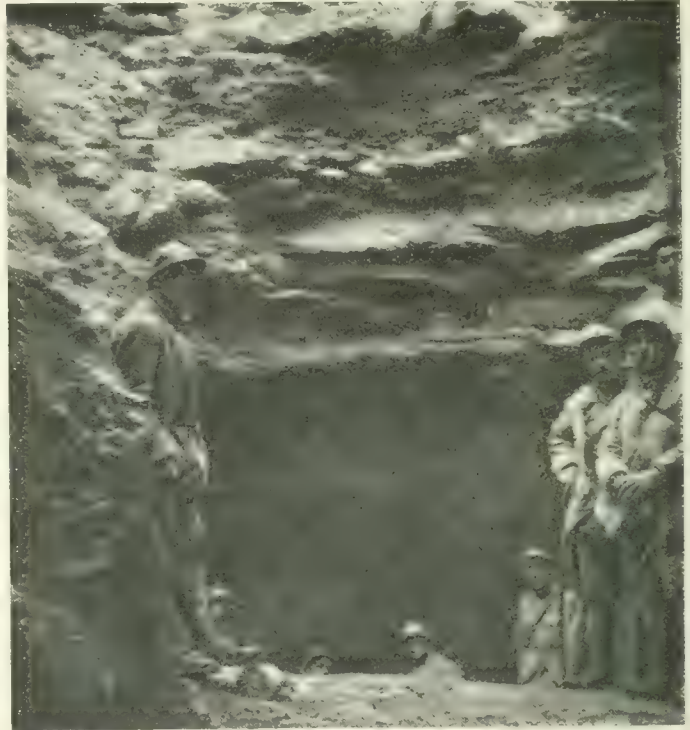
Degoutte had done his work as well. Less than three hours after starting he had taken Malmaison Farm, and was working his way past the northern German support line with Marjoulet towards the Montparnasse quarry. On Degoutte's right General Maud'huy had taken the Bohery quarry; Guyot de Salin's Zouaves, advancing with Colonel

Giraud *and their chaplain* at their head, had stormed Fort Malmaison and completed the capture of the plateau. Still farther to the right the Alpine Chasseurs had accomplished as brilliant a feat as any other troops on this brilliant day, and had thrust the Prussian Guard off the eastern end of the plateau before themselves wheeling to face westwards and join the other victors in the battle in the march down the slopes towards Chavignon.

The victory was complete. The captures of the day were not merely an enormously strong position, but 7500 prisoners and an enormous quantity of material. These were advanced subsequently to 11,000 prisoners, 180 guns, and 720 machine-guns. It was one of the most bitter disappointments

of 1917 that the condition of the Franco-British reserves and the Austro-German blow in Italy made it impossible to exploit the success further. The need of Italy was imperative. Divisions had to be detached from the French front, as well as guns and men from the British

forces, to help to hold the perilous salient where the Italian line on the Upper Piave bent back into the Crenitino. The sacrifice was not in vain. Months afterwards (in September, 1918)



Entrance to the German Strongholds captured in the Battle of Malmaison:
French troops at the entrance to the Montparnasse quarry

the army of another French commander, General Mangin, fought their way to Malmaison and watched the German retreat beyond the Chemin-des-Dames to Laon, the towers of whose Cathedral Church had been in 1917 only descried.

E. S. G.

CHAPTER XVI

FROM LANGEMARCK TO PASSCHENDAELE

(September–November, 1917)

Allies' Heavy Task on the Western Front—Effects of the Abnormal Weather—Countering the New German Defensive System—The Canadians capture Hill 70—The Flanders Battle of September 20—Achievements of Plumer's Army—How the Australians captured Anzac Redoubt—Advance on the Fifth Army Front—Exploits of Scottish and South African Troops—Heroic Deeds of London, Lancashire, and Highland Territorials—Renewed Advance on September 26—Magnificent Stand of Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders—Minor Attacks and Counter-attacks—The Battle of October 4—Fighting over Sacred Ground—Australia's Triumph at Broodseinde—Sir Douglas Haig's Reasons for continuing the Advance—Message from King George—Combined British and French Attack on October 9—Straightening the Allied Front—Further Advances on October 12, 22, 26, and 30—Congratulations of British War Cabinet—Capture of Merckem Peninsula and Outskirts of Passchendaele—Canadians take Passchendaele Village—General Review of Operations.

WHILE the French were consolidating General Guillaumat's victorious gains round Verdun, and preparing the way for General Maistre's brilliant success at Malmaison, Sir Douglas Haig was organizing the third phase of the Homeric contest for the Flanders ridges round Ypres. All these battles of 1917, with the closer co-ordination already existing between the Allies, dovetailed into one another, as well as with the operations of the Italian army, so that, like each move in a game of chess, the significance of every action could only be appreciated by watching the contest as a whole. In no previous stage of the war did this apply with greater force than in the critical months of 1917, when the Allies' hands were forced in the West, first by the tragic collapse of Russia, and afterwards, as will be seen, by the dramatic change in the situation on the Italian front. Throughout the year, as the British Commander-in-Chief remarked in his dispatch of December 25, 1917,

"the task of both the British and French armies has been a far heavier one than had been anticipated, and the enemy's means of meeting our attacks far greater than either he, or we, could have expected".

None of these difficulties would have availed the enemy in Flanders, however, if the weather on the Western front had not conspired to break all records during August in the matter of rainfall, and to impose the heaviest strain that a modern army had ever been called upon to endure. It is a wearisome task to have so constantly to find an excuse in the weather for the restricted progress of Sir Douglas Haig's offensive, but no Commander-in-Chief was ever so scurvily treated in this respect.

"The reason is clear enough as one sees it out here," wrote Mr. Philip Gibbs from the War Correspondents' Head-quarters in the beginning of September. "Modern artillery so rakes up the earth which infantry has to attack that after even moderate rains it becomes a glutinous slime between

ponds formed by linked shell-craters, and the best troops in the world can only make slow headway through it. The guns become hard to move; it is difficult to get up supplies; bombs and rifles are liable to be choked with mud. The aeroplanes often cannot see, so that the artillery have trouble in finding new targets; night signals do not shine through the mist; and in some places men can hardly follow a barrage quick enough to keep pace with it. For all our fighting-men this weather, breaking up the summer too soon, and bringing a foretaste of the discomforts and beastliness of the long wet months of a Flemish winter, is a disappointing and tragic thing."

The weather had been so bad in August that it needed weeks, after the operations described in Chapter XIII, to give the sodden ground time to recover so that Sir Douglas Haig could bring up his heavy guns, and complete his other preparations for the third great attack. It was officially calculated, in the War Cabinet Report for 1916, that the Flanders rainfall of that month was nearly $2\frac{1}{3}$ the normal amount; and even when we acknowledge that the Germans, east of Ypres, had brought to bear against us what has been described as the most perfected defence that the war had ever shown, it was always the weather more than anything else which prevented our indomitable troops from converting their hard-won successes into an overwhelming and decisive triumph. "What was actually accomplished under such adverse conditions," as their Commander-in-Chief wrote at the close of the operations, "is the most conclusive proof that, given a normally fine August, the capture of the whole ridge, within the space of a few weeks,

was well within the power of the men who achieved so much."

Even the super-defences which had been piled up by the Germans to prevent the wooded slopes along the Menin road from falling into our hands were not proof against such troops in the next attack. The experience gained in the earlier assaults had suggested means for countering them, notably in the modification of our artillery tactics, and in extending the flank of the battle farther southwards. Since, however, it was undesirable either to increase the already wide front for which the Fifth Army, under General Gough, was responsible, or to divide between Gough and Plumer the control of the attack against the main ridge itself, Sir Douglas Haig determined to extend the left of the Second Army northwards, and entrust the assault upon the whole of the high ground crossed by the Menin road to Sir Hubert Plumer as a single self-contained operation, to be carried out in conjunction with the attacks of the Fifth Army farther north. Hitherto, it will be remembered, Plumer's victorious troops, extending round the Messines front, had linked up with the Fifth Army on Observation Ridge, and had played only a secondary part in the new battle of Ypres.

The early days of September brought the long-deferred promise of better weather, and no time was lost in pushing forward the necessary adjustments of troops, and the vast paraphernalia of a modern offensive, in order to strike again at the earliest possible moment. All this, however, was, of necessity, a matter of weeks; but everything was

ready before the date finally chosen for the new advance—September 20. In the meanwhile, as already mentioned,¹ there had been a number of minor operations designed to reduce certain of the more important of the enemy's strong points, east and north-east of Ypres. And all the time the never-ending duel of the guns and the snipers, and the ceaseless struggle for the mastery of the air, took heavy toll on both sides. The Germans were also forced to guard themselves on other fronts against a series of successful local attacks at various points. The Canadians, for instance, following up their fine advance to the north of Lens, when they carried Hill 70 and a number of the mining suburbs, delivered another slashing attack on August 21, capturing the line of German trenches guarding the town to the west and south-west, and adding some 200 prisoners to their already considerable bag. Five days later, farther south, north-country troops advanced east of Hargicourt, carried the enemy's advanced positions on a mile front, and took 136 prisoners. These gains were extended, and further prisoners secured, both on September 9 and 11.

Another week and everything was ready for the third phase of the battle for the Flanders ridges. The overture began six days before with a bombardment from accumulated guns which gradually increased in intensity until it surpassed anything of the kind heard even in the biggest of the earlier battles. By almost superhuman labours the guns had been re-grouped, and

the whole system of artillery tactics changed to counter the enemy's new system of defence, a system which had served him too well in the preceding phases of the struggle for this key barrier to the dominating heights east of Ypres. Hitherto, General Sixt von Arnim, who held this sector of Crown Prince Rupprecht's front, had kept his main forces in the background, leaving the weight of the British shells, and the fury of the British infantry attacks, to spend themselves on his thinly-held crater line, where his pill-boxes, so arranged in depth that they defended one another with enfilade fire, and swept all the approaches from the British positions, were proof against anything but a direct hit from one of our "heavies". Too often in our earlier attacks it had happened that our infantry had stormed these crater lines among quagmires through which none but the bravest men could have fought their way, only to be forced back by overpowering masses of fresh enemy troops, launched in sudden counter-attack behind the deadly curtain of fire from the German guns. By September 20 our infantry, as well as our artillery, had been fully trained to meet this new system of defence. The infantry advanced, for one thing, without packs or other heavy kit—no small advantage on the water-logged fields round Ypres—and they dealt systematically and thoroughly with the whole pill-box system before advancing beyond it, their protecting guns in the meantime keeping the enemy's counter-attacks in check by new barrage methods, designed to upset all the enemy's earlier calculations. The

¹ See p. 210.



The British New Dragon Squadron, 1917, attacking one of the German concrete gun emplacements.

result was so successful, both on this and subsequent occasions, that the German Higher Command, quick to recognize the failure of their tactics, were soon found, to quote Sir Douglas Haig's own words on the subject, "endeavouring to revert to something approximating to their old practice of holding their forward positions in strength".

The fruits of our success on September 20, and during the succeeding operations, would have been far greater but for our usual luck in the weather. All the high hopes raised at the beginning of the month, that September would make some amends for August's disastrous downpour, were shattered on the very evening of the new attack. After several fine days, it began to rain heavily again by midnight on the 19th, and it poured steadily through the night, while our troops were silently assembling for the fresh advance at dawn. Any noise that our troops made was stifled by the deafening roar of our final bombardment. A hurricane of shells swept the enemy's positions with annihilating fire for six hours before the infantry assault.

Along some parts of the line the attack appears to have been expected that morning, a regimental order having been sent out at one o'clock to some of the Prussians—subsequently captured—warning them of an impending British advance; and between 1 and 2 a.m. this sector of our front was heavily bombarded by the German batteries.

When dawn broke at last a thick, wet mist blinded our airmen, rendering

observation for the time being impossible. The infantry, who had lain out all night in the rain, were soaked to the skin. Yet they went over the top at 5.45 a.m. with a courage that not even the rains of Flanders could dampen, and with a grim determination to make a clean sweep of the pill-boxes at all costs. The "going", they confessed, was rather bad, but it might have been worse; and they had not far to travel in this new system of attack. The average depth of their objectives was only 1000 yards, increased to a mile on the Menin road, where Sir Hubert Plumer's Second Army was in its own domain.

The battle-front covered a distance, all told, of just over 8 miles along the line then held by us, from the Ypres-Comines Canal north of Hollebeke to the Ypres-Staden road, north of Langemarck, the Second Army linking up with Gough's Fifth Army about half a mile south of the Frezenburg-Zonnebeke road. Plumer's hard-bitten men had apparently the sterner task, not only because they were faced with the blood-soaked region of shattered woodland which had held out against our previous attacks, but also because they had farther to go. This time Sir Douglas Haig hoped to wrest from the enemy all this sinister stretch of ground, and win through to the commanding slopes beyond. The prospects were more favourable than when Gough was faced with the same task in the second attack on August 16. We were now prepared to meet the enemy's new methods, and had also paved the way more thoroughly by our preliminary bombardment. This

time, too, there was not the same danger of counter-attacks from the south as well as from the north, for with the extension of our battle-front below the Menin road the enemy would soon have all his work cut out to defend his own lines in that direction.

The men "went over", as already mentioned, very light, but were well looked after throughout the day by an efficient system of supply. With bayonets poised, and well armed with bombs, they pushed through the mist into the pill-box country behind their own new system of barrages. Those of the Germans who were not surprised by the advance were sufficiently disconcerted by these artillery tactics. Luckily, too, the early mist dissolved as the morning wore on, and the weather improved sufficiently to enable our airmen and gunners to make the most of many golden opportunities. While the attack was in progress our aeroplanes, keeping contact with our troops, fired from their machine-guns over 28,000 rounds from heights ranging from 100 to 1000 feet at the German trenches and shell-holes, as well as at reinforcements coming up to the battle, masses of hostile troops on roads and at work behind the lines, and enemy batteries and transport wherever they could be located. Bombs were also dropped by the score on billets, aerodromes, and ammunition dumps on various parts of the battle area. Meantime, the infantry, keeping strictly to their limited objectives, captured and consolidated the crater lines before the enemy's main forces could reach them. Hostile concentra-

tions were reported before the counter-attacks could be launched, and blown to pieces by our shells. Those actually launched were caught by our barrage, and mown down as they advanced.

September 20, 1917, indeed, was one of our red-letter days. The success, to quote the words of the British Commander-in-Chief, was conspicuous "for precision and thoroughness in execution". English, Scottish, Welsh, Australian, and South African troops, all had a share in the day's achievements, and the fighting was fierce enough for all of them over the desolate ground they captured. It was villainous country the whole of the way.

On the extreme right, the Welsh and west-country troops of Plumer's army had a stiff fight in the small woods north of the Ypres-Comines Canal, but pushed steadily down the spur east of Klein Zillebeke until they had gained the whole of their objectives. On their left, other English battalions had to force their way through what was the largest tract of shattered timber in the whole district—Shrewsbury Forest—reaching the limit of their advance in the valley of the Bassevillebeek, south of the Tower Hamlets Ridge. The upper valley of the Bassevillebeek, and the slopes of Tower Hamlets itself, fell to regiments from the south-east counties, who had first to deal with some troublesome snipers and machine-guns, but fought their way forward until held up for a time by the enemy's more powerful machine-gun posts on the dominating positions of Tower Hamlets and the Veldhoek ridge.

Meanwhile, however, north-country troops were sweeping up and along each side of the Menin road on their left, carrying at long last the whole of Inverness Copse, and, after beating

establish themselves across the Tower Hamlets Ridge.

The north-country division, across the Menin road, was nobly supported on its left by the Australian troops, who stormed their way forward with such irresistible dash that before 10 a.m. they had carried the whole German third line to the north of Polygonveld, taking in their stride the remainder of Glencorse Wood and Nun Wood, as well as Polygonveld itself.

"This advance", writes Sir Douglas Haig, "constituted a fine performance, in which the capture of a difficult piece of ground that had much delayed us was successfully completed. Sharp fighting took place at a strong point known as Black Watch Corner at the south-western end of Polygon Wood. By mid-day this had been captured, the western portion of Polygon Wood had been cleared of the enemy, and the whole of our objectives on this part of our front had been gained."

The Australians, who had enjoyed a well-earned rest after their gallant exploits at Bullecourt, on

the Arras battle-field, had been given, among other tasks, one that specially appealed to them—the capture of the massive stronghold known as the Anzac Redoubt. The platoon to whom fell the honour of this achieve-



British Official Photograph

The Second Army's Chief on the Flanders Front. General Sir Herbert Plumer (in centre of picture) inspecting the effects of a mine explosion

off a counter-attack in the neighbourhood of Dumbarton Lakes, capturing Veldhoek and the line of their final objectives some 500 yards farther east. This timely success assisted the south-east county battalions firmly to

ment carried three Australian flags forward to make as sure as possible that one would survive to plant on their goal. All three standard-bearers were veterans of Gallipoli, and the task was regarded as sacred.

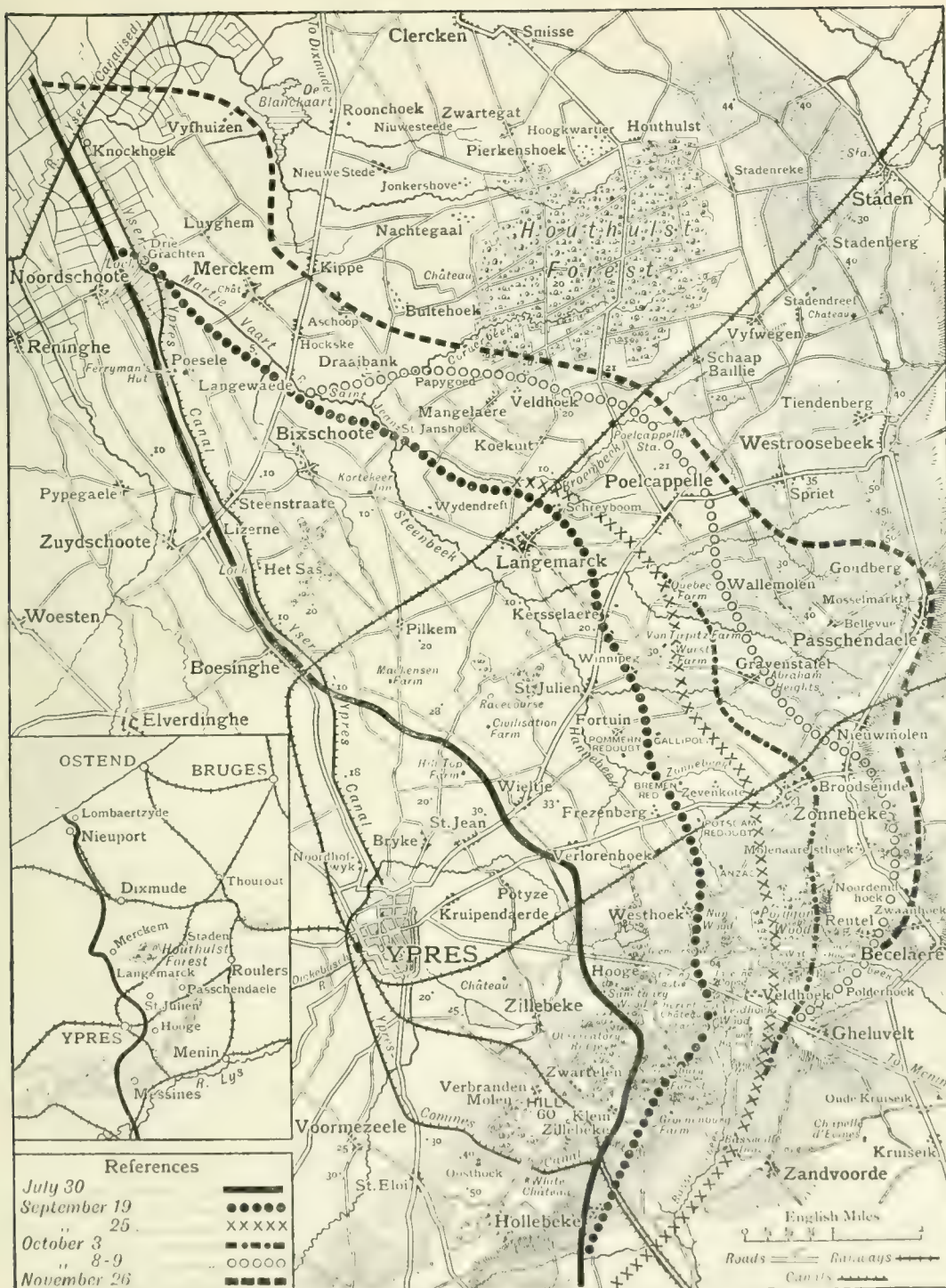
The men of this sector of the Commonwealth, it should be explained, were fighting on the extreme left of Plumer's Second Army, the Scottish troops of Gough's right wing keeping touch with them as they advanced. The Scotsmen were given a similar task to that of the Anzacs. Zonnebeke Redoubt, one of the most powerful forts in the German defences round Ypres—like the Potsdam Redoubt, which they were also deputed to reduce—faced them on the slopes some 300 yards to the north of Anzac. Thus the two operations were very largely interdependent. Heavy fighting fell both to the Scotsmen and the Australians before they reached their goals, and when Zonnebeke Redoubt surrendered, the Australians, who had been temporarily held up by the machine-guns from both forts, as well as from other enemy positions, delivered the final flank attack on Anzac, which induced its garrison to surrender. Immediately afterwards the flag of the Commonwealth was proudly waving its message of triumph on the observation-tower—still standing 15 feet above the ground.

On the Fifth Army front the success of the attack, to quote from Sir Douglas Haig's dispatch, "was equal to that of the Second Army". The Scotsmen, who had linked up with the Australians of the Second Army on their right, had on their left other

doughty comrades from overseas in the South African troops—heroes of many another famous field. It was no small tribute to their fine fighting qualities that the South Africans were now asked to capture the rest of the enemy strongholds on both sides of the Hannebeke stream—Borry Farm and Bremen Redoubt among them—which had cost us so dearly in our earlier and unavailing assaults.

The South Africans not only did all that they were asked to do, but finished their task before 9 a.m., incidentally playing a considerable part with the Scotsmen in the capture of Potsdam Redoubt as well. One outstanding exploit in their advance was the taking of a concrete post north-west of Potsdam, the garrison of which refused to surrender. It was such a hard nut to crack, and so dangerous, with its cunningly concealed machine-guns, that the South Africans were puzzled how to force it open until a man from Johannesburg, who had already won fame by his dare-devil fighting spirit, dashed on to the roof with an incendiary bomb and dropped it down a periscope hole. There were no survivors, save the man from Johannesburg.

On the left of the South Africans, the West Lancashire Territorials were cruelly handicapped by the slushy ground south-east of St. Julien, but, pushing doggedly forward, reached the line of their final objectives early in the afternoon. Farther north, across the Zonnebeke-Langemarck road, a bitter struggle raged all the morning for the difficult ground protected on the ridge above the Hollebeke River



The Battles of the Flanders Ridges, July 30–November 26, 1917: map illustrating successive gains of the Allies, 1917

by the German strong point known as Wurst Farm, which was the key position to the whole system of forts and redoubts in this horrible region; and it was held by Prussian Guards. It was won by the London Territorials as the result of a crafty encircling movement, which, to their unutterable annoyance, placed the crack guardsmen entirely at the Londoners' mercy. This so enraged the Higher Command that infuriated counter-attacks were at once launched by the Second Guards Reserve Division. There were some critical moments while the London boys were bearing the brunt of these assaults by fresh troops, thrown into the fray with Prussian prodigality. The situation was saved very largely through the coolness and resolution of a young lieutenant attached to the Machine-gun Corps, who, having rushed up five machine-guns in the first British attack, had organized his post in readiness for just such an emergency as occurred.

"His guns", to quote from W. Beach Thomas's account at the time from the War Correspondents' Head-quarters, "raked the corridors up which the German counter-attacks moved. The first three or four of these were small and local, but towards evening 1000 men of the Guards Reserve swung into sight, and met the full fire of the machine-guns. Men on the spot stated that 200 fell to each machine-gun before the rest disappeared and crawled into shell-holes."

On the Londoners' left, Highland Territorials were equally successful in capturing the whole of their objectives by mid-day, carrying Quebec Farm and other enemy strong points to the north of Wurst Farm which had been

impregnable centres of fierce fighting in the past, and were only won on September 20 by indomitable courage. Then, on the Highlanders' left, forming the extreme left flank of the whole British front, came the English Riflemen, who had perhaps the toughest task of all as they stormed the German trenches north-east of Langemarck, and advanced their front in a dangerous, irregular line southwards across the Poelcappelle road. The end of the desperate day still found them short of their goal, but at nightfall, while the Germans were concentrating for their heavy counter-attacks farther south, they carried most of the ground which had hitherto checked their advance, though stubborn fighting continued for possession of the short length of trench which had resisted our attacks on, and ever since, August 16. Not until September 23 was this small but powerful spoke finally flung from our wheel.

The ferocity of the enemy's resistance, and his repeated attempts to recover his lost positions—especially the all-important high ground crossed by the Menin road—was the best measure of Sir Douglas Haig's success in this renewed assault on the Flanders ridges. During the afternoon and evening of September 20 no fewer than eleven counter-attacks were made against different parts of our new front. The weather had now made some amends for its early misbehaviour, and the clear light of the latter part of the day enabled our troops to obtain warning of each impending attack.

"In every case", as Sir Douglas Haig telegraphed at the time, "the advance lines

of the German infantry were destroyed by concentrated fire from rifles, machine-guns, and artillery. The obstinacy with which the enemy constantly repeated his attacks only added to his losses, without recovering for him any of the valuable ground which we had won. Exhausted by their previous efforts the enemy made no counter-attacks during the night, and we were able to consolidate our positions undisputed."

We had captured, all told, 3243 prisoners, together with a number of guns. Our own losses in the battle were described by the Commander-in-Chief as light.

Alarmed at the increasing weight and strength of the blows delivered by our Overseas troops, the enemy for some time past had been seeking, with his usual cunning, to sow distrust between the Motherland and the Dominions with lies regarding the proportionate number of troops from each used in the actual fighting line. Fables were circulated to the effect that Great Britain's reserves of men were being kept in idleness while the Dominion soldiers did the fighting for them. None knew better than the Overseas troops themselves how baseless were these reports, but so widely were such fictions distributed that it was deemed advisable at this period to issue an official statement regarding the comparative effort of the Motherland and the Dominions, showing that of every six British soldiers serving at the front in the actual theatres of war—excluding the troops garrisoning India and the defended posts throughout the war—at least five had been recruited in the United Kingdom. This preponderance, as was pointed out, was

only natural, "since the proportion of the white population in the United Kingdom is, compared with the white male population in the Dominions, just over three to one".

It was also shown, to disprove the enemy's allegation that the troops from the Dominions were used more freely than those from the Motherland, that the proportion of casualties on the Western Front was actually higher among the troops from the British Isles than among those from Overseas.

"But," added the official statement, "while this is the case, it must again be borne in mind that for the first eight months of the war no troops from the Dominions were engaged on the Western Front, and therefore during those months there were no casualties to Dominion troops on that front. The figures in the four series of battles on the Somme, around Arras and Ypres, and at Messines, speak for themselves. They are as follows:—

DIVISIONS ENGAGED.

			Motherland.	Dominions.
Somme	...	...	5	1
Arras	...	...	3	1
Ypres	...	...	7	1
Messines	...	...	2	1

CASUALTIES PER DIVISION.

			Motherland.	Dominions.
Somme	...	...	5	4
Arras	...	...	7	6
Ypres	...	...	5	1
Messines	...	...	11	12

"These figures prove that, taking these series of battles as a whole, the casualties among the troops of the Motherland have been proportionately higher than among the Dominion troops. Clearly there can be no question of the former having been spared at the expense of the latter; on the contrary, the evidence points to the fighting

having been shared very equally between the available troops, irrespective of the part of the British Empire from which they come.

"On the other hand, the Motherland troops engaged greatly exceed in number those from the Dominions, and this was only to be expected, considering that the respective white populations are, as stated above, as three to one."

powerful blows were heavily repulsed, save that on September 25, when the Germans, in a forlorn hope to roll up our flank on the Tower Hamlets Ridge, managed to secure a precarious foothold in our lines north of the Menin road. Here a fierce hammer-and-tongs battle raged all day, but by



Drawn by R. Caton Woodville

Feeding the Guns in Action during the British Advance. unloading an artillery reserve-shell wagon just behind the gun-positions

The daily toll grew heavier during the interval succeeding Sir Douglas Haig's assault of September 20, while the necessary preparations were being made for resuming the advance, and the enemy, offering the most obstinate resistance, made repeated attempts to force us back. Especially was this the case on the high ground between Tower Hamlets and Polygon Wood, and the slopes north-east of St. Julien, commanding the approach from that direction to Passchendaele. All these

nightfall, English, Scottish, and Australian troops had cleared every German out again, with the exception of one point where two companies of Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, sent up to fill one of the gaps in our front line, were cut off and surrounded. The same regiment, it will be remembered, had added to its laurels on a similar occasion in the Battle of Arras, when certain of its units, with some of the Middlesex men, were surrounded in an isolated position, but held on

until relieved. The Argyll and Sutherlands, as will be seen, fully lived up to these fine traditions in the present case.

In the meanwhile, Sir Douglas Haig, unruffled by these harassing local affairs, resumed the main battle on September 26, when the front of attack extended from south of Tower Hamlets to north-east of St. Julien, a total distance of rather less than 6 miles. South of the Menin road only a short advance was intended. North of the same notorious thoroughfare the object was to reach a position from which a direct attack could be made upon the portion of the main ridge between Noordendhoek and Broodseinde, traversed by the Beceleere-Passchendaele road. It subsequently transpired, from evidence obtained on the battle-field, that our fresh assault, delivered at 5.30 a.m., anticipated a counter-attack on a grand scale on the part of the Germans themselves, planned for the ensuing evening. The troops brought up for this purpose were now thrown in to check the new British avalanche. The battle lasted all day long; strong positions changed hands repeatedly; but after a hard, sanguinary tussle, the 26th was crowned with a success, in the words of Sir Douglas Haig, "as striking as that of September 20".

The Australians had cleared the remainder of Polygon Wood, together with the German trench line to the east of it, and established themselves on their objectives beyond the Beceleere-Zonnebeke road. It was in the vile region on their right, south of Polygon Wood, among the fortified

farms and concrete strongholds which still guarded the slopes about the Menin road, that the heaviest fighting prevailed. Our advance at this point was made by the English, Scottish, and Welsh battalions of the same division which had borne the brunt of the continuous counter-attacks on the previous day, when the enemy's picked "storm troops", as already mentioned, had only succeeded in cutting off and surrounding one section of our forward line. Even this they had not been able to secure, for the two dauntless companies of Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, though isolated, and continually shelled, had held out through the night with magnificent resolution. Their stand, and their relief on the following day—when, according to Reuter's correspondent, they were found with corpses piled up around them in a manner which offered the most convincing proof of the glorious defence they had made—furnished the outstanding epic of a battle full of unforgettable deeds.

English, Scottish, and Welsh battalions now fought their way forward to the Highlanders' rescue, and the capture of the enemy's positions beyond, with the greatest gallantry. But the Australians on their left, carrying the remainder of Polygon Wood with a rush, were the first of our troops to get in touch with them, afterwards pressing forward in their usual irresistible way to their final objectives. The advance astride the Menin road, where the Argyll and Sutherlands were rescued, led to the severest opposition of the day, and though dogged British valour gradually overcame the

enemy's resistance, and secured the flank of our main attack, it was not until the following evening that the line originally intended was definitely gained in this locality.

In the centre of the main attack, on the Australians' left, English troops penetrated the enemy's defences to a depth of nearly a mile, capturing the ruins of the Zonnebeke village, lost nearly two and a half years before, when the German armies swept down from Passchendaele with their poison gas, in the Second Battle of Ypres. We were now going back to Passchendaele, and though it was a desperate, up-hill journey, we were slowly wiping up many of these old, rankling battle scores.

The extreme left flank had fallen to North Midland and London Territorials, who, attacking on both sides of the Wieltje-Gravenstafel road, also captured the whole of their objectives. They advanced to a depth of half a mile across treacherous country, stoutly defended by a large number of fortified farms and concrete redoubts, and not only seized them, but held them against an early counter-attack. The Germans, returning to the assault in the afternoon, delivered a heavier blow at this point with fresh and larger forces, and succeeded for a time in pressing back our line on a shallow front; but the Territorials, not to be denied, counter-attacked in turn, and recaptured the greater part of the lost ground. Altogether, over 1000 prisoners were captured that day, and ground was won of the utmost tactical value.

The counter-attacks which followed

were as determined and continuous as those which had succeeded our advance on the 20th. Before the day was over, seven fierce assaults had been delivered at points covering practically the whole of the new front, from Tower Hamlets to St. Julien. All these blows, however, were warded off, throwing the German troops and plans into such disorder that, apart from the prolonged struggle south of Polygon Wood, no serious attempt to dispute their defeat was made until the 30th. One attack then succeeded another on various points along the battle front, without the least permanent advantage to the enemy, until October 4 brought the further renewal of our advance "according to plan".

The campaigning season was growing short, and the mocking spell of fine weather gave place on the eve of the new attack to heavy October gales and rain-storms from the south-west. It made the "going" inconceivably difficult for the attacking troops, consisting of Australian, New Zealand, and English divisions, together with a few Scottish, Irish, and Welsh battalions. The attack was launched at 6 a.m. against the main line of the ridge east of Zonnebeke; the front of our principal advance extending from the Menin road to the Ypres-Staden Railway, a distance of some 7 miles. South of the Menin road, a short distance was also undertaken on a limited front of about a mile, with the object of clearing up certain strong points which still threatened our right flank.

The hardest task of all, as the Australian War Correspondent, Mr. C. E. W. Bean, acknowledged in his dis-

patch at the time, fell to the grand British division on the right of the main attack, and those beside it who finished the capture of the Polygon Ridge. These included county troops from Kent, Devon, and Cornwall, together with a battalion of the King's Own Scottish Borderers, who carried their objectives after heavy fighting in the neighbourhood of Polderhoek Château, above Gheluvelt — where Brigadier-General Fitz Clarence saved the day with the 2nd Worcesters in the first battle of Ypres three years before. On their left attacking battalions from Yorkshire, Northumberland, Surrey, and Lincolnshire met equally stubborn opposition, but cleared the enemy out of the small enclosures east of Polygon Wood, and seized the village of Reutel. Following the battle line in the same direction we come to the Surrey, Staffordshire, Devon, Border, and Highland troops, fighting their way foot by foot across the Polygon heights, and capturing the village of Noordendhoek. This brings us to the Australians and New Zealanders, to whom had been accorded the privilege of forming the central spear-head of the whole battle front. All the overseas troops were conscious of the honour of fighting for ground already hallowed by that old British army which, against odds of four to one, had stemmed the German flood on these very slopes in the critical days of 1914, and saved the whole Empire from the gravest peril it had ever known.

Throughout those northern operations round Ypres, indeed, as Sir Douglas Haig pointed out in a memor-

able passage towards the end of his full dispatch on the Flanders Offensive, our troops had been fighting for ground every yard of which was—

“sacred to the memory of those who, in the First and Second Battles of Ypres, fought and died to make possible the victories of the armies which to-day are rolling back the tide stayed by their sacrifice. It is no disparagement of the gallant deeds performed on other fronts to say that, in the stubborn struggle for the line of hills which stretches from Wytschaete to Passchendaele, the great armies that to-day are shouldering the burden of our Empire have shown themselves worthy of the regiments which, in October and November of 1914, made Ypres take rank for ever amongst the most glorious of British battles.”

No man was better entitled than the British Commander-in-Chief to write thus eloquently of the earlier historical days and compare them with the present. He, himself, with the first British army, had held the very ground in 1914 over which he was now leading back his victorious troops of the new armies from home and overseas, and had crushed the final assault of the Prussian Guard north of the Menin road. His old quarters had been among the ruins recovered in the recent fighting, like Fitz Clarence Farm, above Inverness Copse, where the counter-attack of the Worcesters was launched that had filled the gap at Gheluvelt on October 31, 1914, and saved the Channel ports.

Canada had consecrated the same slopes with the blood of those gallant sons of hers who fell in the Second Battle of Ypres, and afterwards the ruins of Hooze and the craters of St. Eloi, south-east of Ypres, in the early

months of 1916; while South Africans had also fought and died on the new battleground as gloriously as on the Somme. And now the Australians and New Zealanders—and hardy Newfoundlanders as well—were again pegging their own sacred claims in the forefront of the new battle. On

the Broodseinde cross-roads three years before, British soldiers were able to look over the plain of Flanders from the German trenches beyond that spot.

"The whole centre of the main attack", as Mr. Bean pointed out, "was Australasian—enthusiastic at fighting as a great Aus-



Ypres, 1917—continued on the opposite page

October 4, 1917, there were more Australians in line than had ever fought together in their country's history, and the New Zealanders were beside them. Advancing beyond the Becelaere-Paschendaale road, they stormed the little hamlet of Molenaarelsthoek, and carried in triumph the vitally important sector marked by the ruins of Broodseinde, establishing themselves well to the east of the crest line.

For the first time since the glorious stand of the "Old Contemptibles" at

traliasian force; and historians will not grudge our pride when we look upon Broodseinde as in some measure an Australian battle."

The enemy was guarding the whole of this front in enormous strength. Besides the two German divisions already in line, he had brought up three fresh divisions, intending to launch an attack upon the positions wrested from him eight days before. Our assaults had often clashed in this way on previous occasions, but it had

rarely happened that they had been timed so closely together. The Germans were actually forming up for the assault at the very moment when our artillery barrage opened, and our infantry attack anticipated theirs by a bare ten minutes. All their plans were thrown to the winds by the

of every hardship and obstacle they gained all their allotted positions according to programme, save for a single enemy strong point at the limit of their advance. On their left, other English divisions, advancing on both sides of the Poelcappelle road, and supported by Tanks, stormed the



Ypres, 1917—continued from the opposite page

overwhelming fire from our guns. Those troops who survived the shells were quickly overcome by the bayonets of the infantry pushed up immediately behind the barrage. Prisoners were taken here in great numbers.

While the Australians were thus carrying all before them in the centre, South Midland troops, on the left of the main attack, were struggling heroically across the swampy valley of the Stroombeek—made doubly difficult by the untimely rains. In spite

western half of Poelcappelle village, and captured the whole of their objectives for the day.

Some of the stiffest fighting was encountered on the extreme left, the enemy clinging for dear life to the rising ground known as 19 Metre Hill. One hostile counter-attack forced us back from a portion of this position early in the afternoon, but our troops, returning to the attack later in the day, recovered all the ground thus temporarily lost.

In the limited advance on the extreme right flank, south of the Menin road, English troops had won all that they had set out to win shortly after mid-day, and sent back large bunches of prisoners to the crowded cages in the rear. Altogether, our captures on this memorable 4th of October exceeded 5000 prisoners, including 138 officers, together with a few guns and many machine-guns.

Undoubtedly it had been a bad day for the enemy. He had suffered a serious reverse, and his counter-attacks on a grand scale had been rendered impossible on the greater part of our front by the destruction of the divisions which had been assembled for his own intended attack. He continued to fight desperately, however, for the ground between the Menin road in the neighbourhood of Reutel, and, after seven counter-attacks at this point had been beaten off in turn, he succeeded in an eighth assault in dislodging us from Polderhoek Château and the eastern portions of Reutel. All his other counter-attacks were shattered and dispersed by our artillery, rifle, and machine-gun fire.

On the following day King George marked his appreciation of the heroism of his troops in the following telegram to Sir Douglas Haig:—

"5th October, 1917.

"The continued success of my gallant troops in Flanders gives me the highest satisfaction, and reflects great credit both upon your leadership and the efficiency, courage, and endurance of all ranks engaged.

"GEORGE R.I."

The battle of Broodseinde, as the attack of October 4 came to be called,

in honour of the Australasians' share in its success, marked a definite stage in the development of Sir Douglas Haig's advance.

"Our line", he wrote in his dispatch, "had now been established along the main ridge for 9000 yards from our starting-point near Mount Sorrel. From the farthest point reached the well-marked Gravenstafel spur offered a defensible feature along which our line could be bent back from the ridge."

But the year was far spent, and it was doubtful if the full fruits of our series of costly victories could be reaped before General Winter took command. Incessant shelling, and the deluge of rain, had combined to make movement increasingly difficult with every fresh, up-hill advance.

"The resultant delays", added the Commander-in-Chief, in weighing the pros and cons of continuing the offensive at this stage, "had given the enemy time to bring up reinforcements, and to organize his defence, after each defeat. Even so, it was still the difficulty of movement far more than hostile resistance which continued to limit our progress, and now made it doubtful whether the capture of the remainder of the ridge before winter finally set in was possible. On the other hand, there was no reason to anticipate an abnormally wet October. The enemy had suffered severely, as was evidenced by the number of prisoners in our hands, by the number of his dead on the battle-field, by the costly failure of his repeated counter-attacks, and by the symptoms of confusion and discouragement in his ranks."

Other facts had also to be taken into account. Russia, though practically out of the war, was still calling for help, M. Kerensky having formally proclaimed a republic on September

16, and parts of the Russian army, though demoralized, making some show of resistance to the enemy; Italy had shot her bolt for the year, and was threatened with a great counter-stroke destined to send her lines reeling back to the Piave; and France, at this moment, needed all the assistance we could give her in the way of keeping the Germans busy while she prepared her forthcoming advance in the neighbourhood of Malmaison, planned for October 23.

All these considerations had their direct and indirect bearings on the fortunes of war in Flanders, and must not be forgotten when we come to count the cost of Sir Douglas Haig's exhausting advance, and estimate its influence on British man-power and British strategy when, in due course, the initiative passed to the enemy in the critical months of 1918. Sir Douglas Haig, having weighed these and other considerations affecting the problem, decided to continue the offensive further, forthwith planning a combined French and British attack for October 9. Unfortunately, the luck of the weather still favoured the enemy. Incessant rains interfered with our artillery preparations, though every effort was made to engage the German batteries in their new positions. On October 7, too, our guns co-operated effectively in the repulse of two hostile counter-attacks. Rain fell in torrents all that day, and continued on the 8th; but nothing was allowed to interrupt the programme arranged for the 9th. "The slippery state of the ground, combined with an exceptionally dark night", records the Commander-in-

Chief, "made the assembling of our troops a matter of considerable difficulty," and those who survived the ordeal are never likely to forget it. A bleak, north-west wind swept the swampy battle-ground with sheets of rain until midnight, and though the rain squalls ceased in the small hours of the morning, the trying period of waiting remained intensely cold. So bad were the conditions that the enemy apparently never dreamt that we would venture another enterprise in the face of such hardships; for he was taken completely unawares, German divisions in one part of the line being surprised in process of relief. One of these was the 195th Division, newly arrived from Russia.

A thick, dank mist covered the whole landscape when, at 5.20 a.m., the British troops followed their barrage on a front of over 6 miles from a point just south of Zonnebeke to their junction with the French army under General Anthoine, north-west of Langemarck. How nobly they strove against extraordinary obstacles was well described by the *Morning Post* Correspondent at the Front:

"They fought to-day in swamps and pools of pent-up water in the narrow valleys that traverse this battle-field; they were held at every step by the clinging mire; buried by shells and dug out again; dragged back into its foul embrace by the machine-guns they would not abandon; and the unquenchable spirit of victory carried them through".

The greatest depth of our advance was on our left, where the Allied troops penetrated the German positions to a distance of nearly $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles.

This was the main object of the new advance—the swinging forward on our left towards Passchendaele village, thus easing the newly-formed salient which had Broodseinde as its most pronounced point. It was for this reason that the French army, which had advanced sufficiently in its early operations to cover the left of the British battle-front, was now asked to prolong the line of attack to a point opposite Draaibank, and make a further advance towards Houthulst Forest, in order to preserve the alignment of the Allied armies.

At the point where the French and British met, the Guards again fought in perfect contact with General Anthoine's troops. Together they made steady progress towards their final objectives, taking in their stride Koe-kuit—the hamlet which the Cold-

streams, as some of them probably remembered as they swept past on this 9th of October, had cleared with the bayonet in the First Battle of Ypres, three years before—together with Veldhoek, Mangelare, and St. Janshoek, besides woods and a great number of farm-houses and strong points. Before the afternoon was over, French and British troops—English, Irish, and Welsh battalions, as well as the Guards—had established themselves on their final objectives on the outskirts of Houthulst Forest, and sent back thousands of prisoners. Stiff fighting took place in the centre, round certain German strong points, between the main ridge and Poelcappelle, but one after another of the obstacles was carried in the face of the fiercest opposition.

Farther south, other English bat-



British Official Photograph

On the Way to the Felling Zone: busy scenes on the Pkhem road



British Official Photograph

In the Ypres Salient: British troops leaving their billets in a badly shelled village

talions completed the capture of Poelcappelle after bitter hand-to-hand fighting, while on the right centre a Third Line Territorial Division, comprising the Manchester, East Lancashire, and Lancashire Fusilier regiments, earned special mention in the day's official report for their splendid advance northwards in the direction of Passchendaele, "capturing all their objectives under the most trying and difficult circumstances with great determination and gallantry". Yorkshire and South Midland Territorials also carried their line forward in this direction, while the Australians, on the extreme right, stormed the crest of the ridge, east and north-east of Broodseinde, con-

solidating all that they were asked to take.

While this main attack was being delivered, subsidiary operations were carried out east of Polygon Wood, in which the Warwickshire and Honourable Artillery Company battalions successfully regained the remainder of the village of Reutel, from a portion of which the enemy had forced us, as already recorded, in one of his counter-attacks, five days before. The Allies' captures in the course of the whole day's advance included 2100 prisoners and a few guns.

The weather had cleared as the day wore on, and now, as if to lure the British on to further sacrifices, seemed to take a turn for the better.

For several days it was officially described as unsettled rather than persistently wet, and progress had not yet become impossible. The Commander-in-Chief probably remembered that the first Battle of Ypres did not begin until October 21, and that it lasted until November 11. At all

efforts to retain his narrowing foothold on these almost impassable slopes, no troops in the world could have accomplished.

Launched at 5.25 a.m. on October 12, between the Ypres-Roulers Railway and Houthulst Forest, the renewed attack made headway along the spurs



Australian Official Photograph

The Way to Passchendaele: typical view across the battle-field over which our troops had to advance in the autumn of 1917.

events, he decided "to press on while circumstances still permitted".

The decision was a fine tribute to the indomitable vigour and tenacity of the Allied troops under his command, and his faith in them was justified; but the weather again broke on the very eve of the new advance, and, raining steadily throughout the ensuing day, it set them a task which, in the face of the enemy's superhuman

and higher ground, but in the valleys, below Passchendaele, the swollen streams had overflowed their banks, so that many of our troops, after facing the enemy's shells all night and waiting for the dawn through hours of drenching rain and wind, had to plunge at last nearly waist-high into the clinging mud. Some of them disappeared in the darkness, and were only rescued with difficulty.

That any progress was made at all was little short of wonderful, and it says much for the grim determination of the troops that along most of the battle front they captured a large number of defended localities, fortified farms, and woods, and incorporated them in their line. This was especially the case along the spurs and higher ground. In the impassable valleys it was wisely determined not to proceed with the attack, the advance from this direction being cancelled.

Farther north, on both sides of the Ypres-Staden Railway, the Guards and English county divisions gained their objectives in spite of everything, though the issue hung in the balance here for many hours. The fate of these advance troops, battling in magnificent isolation both with the mud and a determined enemy, long remained uncertain, but communication with them was at length re-established, and the captured ground consolidated. Over 1000 German prisoners were captured in this battle of the swamps, in which the troops employed, to quote from Sir Douglas Haig's own testimony, "displayed remarkable gallantry, steadfastness, and endurance in circumstances of extraordinary hardship".

Trying as were the conditions, he had still to call on his men for further hammer-strokes on these Passchendaele slopes. There was no longer, alas! the least hope that the ground would improve sufficiently to allow them to capture the remainder of the ridge before the end of the year; but it was more than ever necessary to give the Germans in this quarter no rest. Sir Douglas was at this moment

planning his surprise attack with Byng's army at Cambrai—already fixed for November 20—the success of which was absolutely dependent, not only upon complete secrecy, but also upon inducing the enemy to continue his concentration of troops on the Flanders front. The French and Italians would also benefit from our continued pressure at Passchendaele—the Italians to a greater extent than anyone at that time realized.

It was for these reasons that the British Commander-in-Chief made further calls upon his war-worn troops round Ypres. Their never-failing gallantry, even in the most adverse circumstances, earned every word of the following message sent by the British War Cabinet at this stage of the operations to Sir Douglas Haig:—

"The War Cabinet desire to congratulate you and the troops under your command upon the achievements of the British armies in Flanders in the great battle which has been raging since July 31. Starting from positions in which every advantage rested with the enemy, and hampered and delayed from time to time by most unfavourable weather, you and your men have nevertheless continuously driven the enemy back with such skill, courage, and pertinacity as have commanded the grateful admiration of the peoples of the British Empire, and filled the enemy with alarm.

"I am personally glad to be the means of transmitting this message to you and to your gallant troops, and desire to take this opportunity of renewing my assurance of confidence in your leadership, and in the devotion of those whom you command.

"D. LLOYD GEORGE."

To which Sir Douglas replied, on the following day:—

"The British armies in France are proud to have won the congratulations of the War Cabinet and the generous appreciation conveyed in your message of the efforts made and the results achieved in Flanders since July 31. All ranks are determined to achieve victory and feel confident of doing so. I beg to thank you for your expression of confidence in myself and in the great army in France which I have the honour to command."

The last phase of the prolonged battle round Ypres in 1917 resolved itself more and more into a struggle for Passchendaele village, and that portion of the ridge on which stood the shell-swept ruins of the place. In conjunction with this movement, which thus threatened the formidable strongholds of the enemy in Houthulst Forest from the south-east, another operation was now prepared, with our Allies on our left, threatening the forest from the south-west. This double menace was alone sufficient to keep the German armies in undiminished strength in Flanders. "Whoever holds Houthulst Forest", said the Duke of Marlborough, "holds Flanders"; and the Germans were determined to cling to it to the last gasp.

For over a week, however, there was comparative quietude along the front, and some improvement in the weather after the middle of October made life a little less hideous on the Passchendaele ridges. Then, on the 22nd, came a new advance, in which the left of the British battle front was carried forward within the southern edge of Houthulst Forest by battalions of the Gloucesters, Cheshires, Lancashire Fusiliers, Manchesters, and Royal

Scots, the British acting in conjunction with the French on their left. The ground was little better than a morass, but the Allies, though forced to advance in places up to their waists in water, captured the southern defences of the forest above Veldhoek, including a whole series of fortified farms and strong points. On the right sector of our attack, ground of considerable local importance east of Poelcappelle was won by battalions of the Norfolk, Suffolk, and Essex regiments, together with a battalion of Northumberland's famous Fighting Fifth.

A brief lull ensued while the French armies on the Aisne were developing their brilliant victory of October 23. Three days later came another Allied advance in the rain and mud, for, with our usual luck, the weather again broke suddenly while our troops were assembling for a fresh attack beyond Ypres. This time the offensive extended from near Gheluvelt, on the south, to beyond Draaibank, where General Anthoine's gallant French army was fighting, on the north. But, as on the 22nd, the operations were planned on separate sectors with limited objectives, instead of along one continuous and united front.

The main attack was delivered by English and Canadians on our right, north of the Ypres-Roulers Railway. The Canadians had been brought back to the Salient—so full of bloody but heroic memories for them—from the Lens sector, where we last saw them tightening their strangle-hold on that city after their dashing capture of Hill 70. They were now thrown into the furnace round Ypres to take the

higher slopes of Passchendaele above the ground already carried in recent battles by the Australians; and they faced the flooded hillside and unfathomable mud with the invincible courage which had placed them in the front rank of the finest troops in the world. Attacking on both sides of the small stream known as the Ravebeek, flowing southwards from Passchen-

spite", as Sir Douglas Haig bears witness, "of immense difficulties from marsh and floods in the more low-lying ground". A subsidiary attack was made at the same time in the neighbourhood of the Menin road by English troops, who succeeded in entering Gheluvelt and capturing Polderhoek Château, together with a number of prisoners. "Our men's rifles, however", again to quote from the Commander-in-Chief's dispatch, "had become choked with mud in their advance, and when, later in the morning, strong German counter-attacks were developed, they were obliged to withdraw."

The French operations on our left were also subsidiary, and were limited on this day to establishing bridgeheads across the floods of the St. Jansbeek. Here, to the



An Australian Photograph

Transport Difficulties in the Swamps of Flanders

dale, they had gained by nightfall, after a day of stubborn fighting and incredible hardships, practically the whole of their objectives, including the powerful defences of the Bellevue Spur, which had resisted our efforts in previous attacks.

The English troops on their left, consisting of London Territorial battalions and the Royal Naval Division, also made substantial progress in the face of strong opposition along the spurs between the ridge and our main positions east of Poelcappelle. "in

south west of the great Houthulst Forest, the inundations were so deep that the only other way of crossing in many parts would have been by swimming. In various parts of this flooded region were necks of land, or peninsulas, and it was in order to seize the most important of these, known as Merekem Peninsula, that the French were now advancing. The front of attack was on the west side of the place falsely named Drauibank (Drybank), and they performed their bridging task to perfection, besides captur-

ing a number of fortified farms and isolated concrete posts in the face of strong opposition.

Next day the French made further progress in this sector, continuing their advance in concert with Belgian troops, who crossed the Yser opposite Knockehoek, and captured Aschhoop, Kippe, and Merckem. The southern end of Blankaart Lake was reached on the same day, and early on October 28 French and Belgian troops completed the capture of the whole Merckem Peninsula. More than 400 prisoners were taken by our allies in these operations, bringing our total captures since the renewal of our offensive on October 26 to over 1200.

If Sir Douglas Haig had any lingering doubts as to whether further sacrifices on the Passchendaele slopes were justified, they were swept aside at this period by the critical turn of events in Italy. Our Italian Allies were still reeling under the great counter-stroke delivered by the Austro-German armies on October 24. Pressure on the Ypres front, therefore, had to be maintained at all costs in order to keep as many German troops in Flanders as possible.

In pursuance of this policy, Sir Douglas Haig continued the deadly struggle for the last laps of the dominating ground whence, once wholly conquered, he might command the open plains beyond. On the 30th, the Canadians, following up their capture of the Bellevue Spur, sealed the fate of Passchendaele by storming the fortress known as Crest Farm, the outer location of the village, standing on a knoll on its south west outskirts.

Fierce fighting took place at all the surrounding points, but particularly on the spur west of Passchendaele, where no fewer than five hostile counter-attacks were beaten off in the course of the day. The Canadians were greatly assisted in these operations by the fire of the German machine-guns which they captured in Crest Farm.

In the meanwhile, farther north, where the ground was low-lying and intercepted by the flooded streams, battalions of the same London and Naval divisions which had shared in the attack four days previously again forged ahead wherever it was possible to find a way across the swamps. "The almost impassable nature of the ground in this area, however," records the Commander-in-Chief, "made movement practically impossible, and it was only on the main ridge that much could be effected."

The sealing of the fate of Passchendaele was no unworthy celebration of the third anniversary of the British triumph on these same battle-fields, October 31, 1914, by common consent marking the turning-point of the First Battle of Ypres, when the German attempts to hack a way through to the Channel ports and annihilate the British army were finally frustrated. Sir Douglas Haig could scarcely have been unmindful of this when, just three years later, he was able to report that the number of German prisoners captured by the British in France through the month of October, 1917, was 9125, including 242 officers. We had also taken, during the same period, 15 guns, 431 machine-guns, and 42 trench mortars.

On November 6, after several days of small advances and intermittent fighting, the Canadians delivered the *coup de grâce* to the German garrison in Passchendaele by capturing the whole of the village—or all that remained of it—as well as the high ground immediately to the north and north-west. Short, sharp fighting took place for the possession of “pill-boxes” in the northern end of the village, around Mosselmarkt, and on the Goudberg Spur, but all the objectives were taken, and a hostile counter-attack was beaten off, before 9 a.m. Over 400 prisoners were captured in this most successful attack, by which, as Sir Douglas justly observes, the Canadian troops, for the second time within the year, “achieved a record of uninterrupted success”.

Save for a supplementary advance on November 10—when British and Canadian troops, battling as hard as ever against both the elements and the enemy, gained further ground along the main ridge; and the activity continued for another fortnight for the ulterior objects already referred to—the Passchendaele victory closed our Flanders operations for the year.

“This offensive,” writes the Commander-in-Chief in his general review at the end of his dispatch, “maintained for three and a half months under the most adverse conditions of weather, had entailed almost superhuman exertions on the part of the troops of all arms and services. The enemy had done his utmost to hold his ground, and in his endeavours to do so had used up no less than seventy-eight divisions, of which eighteen had been engaged a second or third time in the battle, after being withdrawn to rest and refit. Despite the mag-

nitude of his efforts, it was the immense natural difficulties, accentuated manifold by the abnormally wet weather, rather than the enemy's resistance, which limited our progress and prevented the complete capture of the ridge. . . . Our troops advanced every time with absolute confidence in their power to overcome the enemy, even though they had sometimes to struggle through mud up to their waists to reach him. So long as they could reach him they did overcome him, but physical exhaustion placed narrow limits on the depth to which each advance could be pushed, and compelled long pauses between the advances. The full fruits of each success were consequently not always obtained. Time after time the practically beaten enemy was enabled to reorganize and relieve his men, and to bring up reinforcements behind the sea of mud which constituted his main protection.

Notwithstanding the many difficulties, much has been achieved. Our captures in Flanders since the commencement of operations at the end of July amount to 24,065 prisoners, 74 guns, 941 machine-guns, and 138 trench mortars. It is certain that the enemy's losses considerably exceeded ours. Most important of all, our new and hastily trained armies have shown once again that they are capable of meeting and beating the enemy's best troops, even under conditions which favoured his defence to a degree which it required the greatest endurance, determination, and heroism to overcome.”

No tribute was ever more nobly earned, not only by the infantry from all parts of the Empire, but by every arm of the Service. Speaking of the gunners, for example, Sir Douglas points out that the courage of our infantry would have been in vain but for the skill, steadfastness, and devotion of our artillery, whose task was a peculiarly trying one throughout the battle. Despite the extraordinary

strain to which the gunners were subjected—"our batteries having to remain in action practically without protection of any kind, day after day, week after week, and even month after month, under a continuous bombardment of gas and high-explosive shell"—they never failed to dominate the German artillery whenever condi-

of success was seen, not only in our territorial gains, but also in the fact that, from beginning to end, as many as 131 German divisions had been engaged and defeated by less than half that number of British divisions; as well as in the total captures since the opening of the spring campaign: 57,696 prisoners, including 1290 officers, 393



British Official Photograph

Red Cross Work in the Flanders Mud: R.A.M.C. stretcher-bearers bringing in wounded during the advance on Passchendaele.

tions of light and weather made accurate shooting possible.

So ended a memorable record of eight months' continuous fighting—for the Commander-in-Chief's dispatch begins with the Arras Battle in the spring and concludes with the capture of Passchendaele in November. "No other example of offensive action on so large a scale, so long, and so successfully sustained, has yet been furnished by the war." The measure

guns, including 109 "heavies", 561 trench mortars, and close upon 2000 machine-guns.

"Without considering the effect which a less vigorous prosecution of the war by us might have had in other theatres," again to quote Sir Douglas's words, "we have every reason to be satisfied with the results which have been achieved by the past year's fighting. The addition of strength which the enemy has obtained, or may yet obtain, from events in Russia and Italy has already largely been discounted, and the ultimate

destruction of the enemy's field forces has been brought appreciably nearer."

The effect of this was not seen for many months, as the dramatic turn of events on the Western Front during the following spring and summer was to prove, but Sir Douglas's words were none the less true. In summing up the achievements of British and French arms in this crucial year of 1917, when Russia's collapse and Italy's summer

triumphs were succeeded by her debacle in the autumn, the British Commander-in-Chief was fully justified in his claim that in such circumstances the victories of Arras, Vimy, Messines, and Flanders won by us, and those at Moronvilliers, Verdun, and Malmaison by the French, constitute a record of which the Allied Armies, working in close touch throughout, had every reason to be proud.

F. A. M.

CHAPTER XVII

THE FIRST BATTLES OF CAMBRAI

(November–December, 1917)

Situation on Western Front in November—Tactics and Surprise—Tanks—The Cambrai Sector—Reasons for Sir D. Haig's Decision—The Hindenburg Line—Complete Success of the First Rush—Lateau Wood—La Vacquerie and Welsh Ridge—The Highlanders and Flesquières—Canal du Nord and the Ulstermen and Yorkshires—Bridges at Marcoing and Masnières—Canadian Horse—Ineffectiveness of the Cavalry—Results of First Day's Operations—The Second Day—Bourlon Ridge and Fontaine-Notre-Dame—German Counter-attacks—Struggle for Bourlon—Defensive Precautions—The German Counter Surprise—Reverse in the Gonnelleu Sector—Loss of Villers-Guislain and Gouzeaucourt—Guards Stem the Rush—Withdrawal from Bourlon and Bonavis Ridge—The Balance Sheet of Gain and Loss.

THROUGH the weeks of a sodden September, and an October which completed the reduction of the Flanders battlefield to a welter of mud, British and Canadian divisions, as already shown, had striven to complete the conquest of the Flanders ridge. The Germans, receiving fresh accessions of force from the idle Eastern Front, were stiffening their resistance; the scale in superiority of bayonets was slowly tipping against the Allies; and the German Higher Command was, indeed, even then entering on the preparations which

would enable them to launch a counter-offensive weighted with many divisions trained on the Riga front in new tactical methods of attack. They were biding their time, reserving their effort, as was the German way, till, the last item of organization having been completed, they could command an effort—that effort so often and so unavailingly sought for three and a half years by the belligerents—which should compass a decision. Such a decision had been reached by fraud and treachery on the Eastern Front: the German Higher Command hoped

to realize it by force of arms on the Western Front in 1918. Meanwhile they waited, they prepared, they accumulated.

Into this plan Sir Douglas Haig intruded, towards the end of November, 1917, with an attack which is memorable equally for its half-achieved success and for the pattern it set for the character of the warfare which was to be waged in the ensuing year. Hitherto the conditions of fortified zones on either side of the 400-mile line along which the belligerents faced one another had imposed, or had evolved, a method of assault from which there were few departures. A deluge of high-explosives was poured on the sector of line which was to be assaulted, till trench defences, wire entanglements, and the bulk of the defensive apparatus were obliterated; and when this was done, after a longer, or shorter, a fiercer, or a more unexpected bombardment, the attacking infantry followed into the devastated zone bayonet or bomb in hand to complete the work. They were sheltered by a barrage fire which beat down opposition in front of them, and lengthened in range as they advanced, while other guns of longer range aimed at holding off enemy reinforcements or at destroying the enemy's artillery.

This method was brought to a high state of perfection, and the device of the "creeping barrage", which required unfaltering accuracy and unfailing co-ordination between the artillery and the infantry, owed its perfecting to French and British inventiveness equally. There were,

however, few opportunities of surprise. The only deception that could be practised was that of misleading the enemy as to the date of the attack: its hour was almost inevitably advertised by the hurricane blast with which the guns completed the preparation.

Sir Douglas Haig sanctioned at Cambrai a method which reintroduced the element of surprise. The surprise had two aspects. The first of these was that the enemy had no reason to anticipate an attack in that quarter, which was widely separated from the areas in which the British forces had been attacking. The repeated attacks in Flanders of the Fifth and Second Armies, and those of the French at the Chemin-des-Dames and east of Rheims, had brought about large concentrations of the German forces on these fronts, with a resultant weakening of their garrisons elsewhere. Among these weakened sectors the Cambrai front presented an exceptional advantage for the second element of surprise, which took the form of the employment of tanks.

Tanks were, in brief, to replace the preliminary bombardment. The Cambrai front was on the whole favourable for their employment, which the Flanders front was not. The ground was less sodden, less pock-marked with water-filled shell-holes, and it was possible to hide the tanks while they were being collected for the attack. Hitherto the preparation for attack had necessitated the assembly of vast numbers of gun, and still vaster ammunition dumps, which could hardly escape the least perceptive

German aviator. That tanks could be assembled without alarming the German Intelligence service was believed to be possible, and events proved that it was.

Other reasons for selecting the Cambrai sector were that if the German defences could be broken through,

armies, was proved both then and in the campaign of the autumn of 1918.

But Sir Douglas Haig remarks in his dispatch of March 4, 1918, that the capture of Cambrai itself was hardly contemplated. Any advance in that direction was primarily intended to cover the flank of the main



One of the British Tanks during the Capture of Cambrai.

and Bourlon on the north could be secured, with a good defensible flank position on the east—that is to say, towards Cambrai—the British forces would be well placed to thrust upwards towards the Sensée River and the north-west. Cambrai would be menaced; and the value which the Germans set on Cambrai, both as a railway and road junction and as a bastion of their central group of

movement towards Bourlon, and to puzzle the enemy as to the intentions of the British commander. In fact, in the design Cambrai was not regarded as within our reach, though the effectiveness of the surprise almost gave it to us, and might have done so if one or two things had happened, or had not happened, which were not foreseen.

There were other reasons yet. The

Germans were continually strengthening that section of the Siegfried or Hindenburg line running through Cambrai, and it was quite certain that, as soon as the weather and the winter brought the unfinished struggle for the Flanders ridge to an end, they would redistribute their forces and put some of them here. They had already brought fresh divisions from the Russian front, and would bring more. As a fact, they did bring more, and they took the opportunity afforded by the absence of Russian resistance to train them, so that they were actually no less efficient, and perhaps more so for attacking purposes, than those which had been exhausted by the battering of the French and the British during the summer.

Moreover, winter would freshen all their forces. Consequently, if a parting blow was to be struck at the Germans before the campaigning months ended, it must be struck at once. Before it actually was struck, German divisions were on their way to Italy to aim that blow at General Cadorna's flank which, almost in the twinkling of an eye, was to change the face of the war—happily not for the last time.

The Field-Marshal's decision was not made without anxious deliberation. His troops had had a year of bitter work; they had suffered great losses in their most successful offensives. Mr. Bonar Law stated, in 1918, that the British losses in 1917 had been greater than that of any of the Allies. Only part of these losses in Sir Douglas Haig's divisions had been replaced, and many of the recently arrived drafts were far

from being fully trained. He had never had the reserves at his disposal to enable him to set aside large forces which could be intensively trained in attack, as the Germans trained troops at Riga. Consequently he would have to call upon tried and hard-worked divisions for any further effort which should come at this time of year.

On the other hand, he did not intend the present enterprise to assume large proportions; it would be a limited offensive, both because the forces which could be spared were not great, and because the necessity of concealment shut out the idea of using considerable ones. While the "ayes" and "noes" of the enterprise were being considered, preparations were inconspicuously made. There were other preparations going on at the same time, namely, those of the Germans against Italy. When these were revealed, another reason appeared for letting the "ayes" have it, namely, that the Germans must be prevented from diverting further forces to the Italian front. So Sir Douglas Haig, cutting his coat according to his cloth, came in the end to the decision that he could muster enough force to obtain a preliminary success, but that the exploitation of this success must depend on the possibilities it opened out. He thought that if secrecy could be maintained up to zero hour, then, the blow having been struck, no large German reinforcements could be brought up for two days.

As a matter of subsequent history, if the attack had been pressed with unrelenting and flawless efficacy by all the forces, without exception, con-

cerned in it, perhaps the Cambrai railway might have been cut, and German reinforcements delayed for a much longer period; but that is a matter of conjecture for future students of the war with all the facts on both sides before them. A great British General, Lord Roberts, observed, when his plans were upset by a subordinate General at Poplar Grove, in the South African War, that "in war you cannot expect everything always to go all right". At Cambrai, in the words of the Australians, "somebody missed the 'bus". But it must be insisted on that, from the first, Sir Douglas Haig reckoned on only a two-days' attack, and he informed General Sir Julian Byng, to whom the plans were entrusted, that the advance would be stopped after that time, or sooner, unless the results gained, and the general situation, justified its continuance.

The "surprise" of the attack was to be the absence of artillery preparations, and the substitution of tanks for the purpose of bursting through the deep zone of enemy wire. The guns were to assist both tanks and infantry by barrage and counter-battery work, but there was to be no previous practice to register ranges, for that would awaken the enemy's suspicions. It was a high test for the artillery, much of which had been trained only since the new armies were formed. In the event, they came out with the highest honours.

If artillery, tanks, and infantry could pierce the enemy's defences, then the cavalry were to be let loose through the breach made, and were to

raid the enemy's communications, cut his railway, and hustle him to the best of their ability. It was to be what Rugby footballers call a kick-and-rush game. Sir Douglas Haig mentions in his dispatch that General Pétain, to whom the plans were secretly communicated, approved, and "offered to lend every assistance". This is a point to be noted, for it illuminates the distinction between the co-operation of forces as it existed in 1917, and the unity of command which was effected in 1918, and was so fruitful of results. Unity of command existed at the time of the Cambrai attack to the extent proved by Sir Douglas Haig's communication of his plans to General Pétain, and the latter's offer of assistance. But in the event the strong force of French infantry and cavalry which was offered to the British commander, if he should want it, was never used, though at one juncture (November 20) it was set in motion.

The projected action was to serve as a test of the German defences, which formed here a kind of knot in the system, or systems, of what the British elected to call the Hindenburg line, but to which the Germans gave a varied nomenclature derived from the Nibelungenlied, such as Siegfried, Hunding, Wotan, &c. The first of the trench systems, which Byng's Third Army was to assault, constituted a part of the main Hindenburg line, and ran north-west for 6 miles from the Canal de l'Escaut at Banteux to Havrincourt; thence it ran north along the line of the Canal du Nord for 4 miles more to

Moeuvres, there introducing a salient in the German front. Behind this lay other lines—the Hindenburg Reserve line, also a main system, and the Beaurevoir-Masnières-Marquion line. The first of these was a mile behind the Hindenburg main line, the other



Behind the Hindenburg Line. Brit. entry on duty at a captured German sentry post

was from $3\frac{1}{2}$ to $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles distant. In front of all was a series of strongly-fortified positions, such as La Vacquerie, and the north-eastern corner of Havrincourt Wood.

The secrecy that the operations demanded was maintained to perfection. The surprise to the Germans of the attack was hardly greater than to the sections of the British line which were not taking part in it.

When General Byng's bombshell exploded, before daylight of November 20, its reverberations came as a shock to everyone, though, in order to perplex the Germans, simultaneous demonstrations with gas, smoke, and guns were set in motion all along the British line south of the Scarpe, and feints were made at Epéhy and between Bullecourt and Croisilles.

In the 6-mile sector of attack there was less bombardment than anywhere else. The tanks took the place of it, and from Gonnelleu to the Canal du Nord went bursting through the wire. A smoke barrage went with them, and in the darkness—made darker on that November morning—they rolled on across the German trenches, smashing machine-gun posts and driving dazed Germans like rabbits to cover. Not all, however. The steadiest and the bravest of the enemy rushed to their machine-guns and got them into action. But behind the tanks the British platoons came striding along the lanes cut in the wire, shouting in their excitement, bayonet and bomb ready.

Then, while the Germans were still only half awake to the surprise that had been sprung on them, the British artillery poured in its deliberately retarded fire on German support trenches and on German artillery positions. Their practice was admirable. The reply of the German artillery was feeble than the resistance of the German infantry, and bore no comparison with that of the machine-guns, which, in some sheltered positions, was up to the usual high standard of this German arm. But

the effect of the surprise was competent to beat down quickly all resistance on the main Hindenburg system and its forward defences. The tanks patrolled the trenches, squirting bullets and shells; the infantry swarmed over the dug-outs and shelters, hurling down grenades, often with a vicious: "Here,

ing down the wire, lolloping over obstacles, sweeping the traverses with machine-gun fire. A German officer who was captured testified to the horrified amaze with which he watched the invasion: "Our men would not stand against them," and added: "Es war ein glänzendes Angriff"—"It was



British Official Photograph

One of the Tanks bringing in its Prize—a 5.9 German Naval Gun—under Camouflage

share that among you!" as they slammed down the bombs.

The order of the day of the Tanks Commander deserves to be recorded. It was: "The Tanks Corps expects that every tank will do its damnedst!" They did. The troops they attacked knew nothing of the menace that overhung them till they saw the monsters bearing down on them out of the dawning light, crush-

a brilliant attack," and praise could go no higher. The "glänzendes Angriff" overran all the first system, and, as the light began to give visibility, went on to the attack on the Hindenburg Reserve line with a swarm of low-flying aeroplanes as its terrifying heralds.

In this advance the 12th (Eastern) Division, moving along the Bonavis Ridge on the right of the attack, ran

into the fiercest nucleus of resistance at Lateau Wood, where German batteries were strongly posted. Flesh and blood strove fiercely against steel and shrapnel; and here the German infantry, having good support and having mastered the dismay of surprise, fought well. The British tanks were our best reply to the German guns, and with their aid the position, after a stiff fight which lasted till late in the morning, was taken, together with its guns. In such fighting there was no question of the guns being got away.

While this struggle was going on, the 20th (Light) Division, which had taken La Vacquerie as its share of the morning surprise, stormed the defences of Welsh Ridge. The 6th Division carried Ribecourt—a street fight—and the 62nd Division (West Riding Territorials) bored its way into and through Havrincourt. These captures were all of use to the 51st Division (Highland Territorials), the flanks of which were thereby secured, and which, advancing on the left centre of the attack up the slopes of Flesquières Hill, had a particularly hard bit of work to do. At Flesquières Château was a stout brick wall skirting the grounds and giving excellent shelter to Germans, who held the division in front while machine-guns swept the smooth uphill approaches. The tanks came to help the Highlanders, but the tanks themselves suffered.

Sir Douglas Haig's dispatch gives chivalrous mention to the conduct of a German artillery officer, "who, remaining alone at his battery, served

a field-gun single-handed, till killed at his gun". Many of the direct hits on the tanks were made by this courageous officer, whose "great bravery aroused the admiration of all ranks". But the Highlanders could not stop for him; they took all that they set out to take, except Flesquières village, before midday. The Durham Light Infantry, who were with the Highlanders, here took seven guns, charging them point-blank and killing the gunners. On the left of the attack, towards the Canal du Nord, the 36th (Ulster) Division captured a German strong point on the spoil bank of the canal—a mound sixty feet high and defended by tunnelled dug-outs. They were then joined by the West Riding Yorkshiremen, who had dashed into and through Havrincourt, performing a similar feat to that of the Durhams on their way; and Ulstermen and Yorkshiremen marched on with the rest beyond the Hindenburg Reserve line to the last points on which General Byng had rested his hopes.

Now was the moment at hand when the second and more daring part of the day's design was to be set in motion, namely, the loosing of the cavalry. As a preliminary, tanks and British infantry battalions of the 29th Division entered Masnières and captured Marcoing and Neuf Wood, thus securing a passage over the Canal de l'Escaut at both villages. At Marcoing the tanks arrived only just in time to save the bridge. A party of German engineers was in the act of running out an electric wire to blow it up; the machine-gun of the

tank caught them and they fled, leaving the bridge unbroken. But at Masnières we were less lucky; the Germans partially destroyed the main road bridge, and the first tank that attempted to cross the remains burst through it and wrecked it.

That was bad, but worse was behind. Over the sunken roads and defences on the hither side of the

most promising results. There was one bright relieving incident. A squadron of Canadian cavalry (Fort Garry Horse) got across the canal on a temporary bridge thrown over by a little body of Belfast shipwrights, and, galloping right through the entrenched line held by the Germans who had come up, finished by charging and capturing a German battery



Canadian Cavalry going into Action

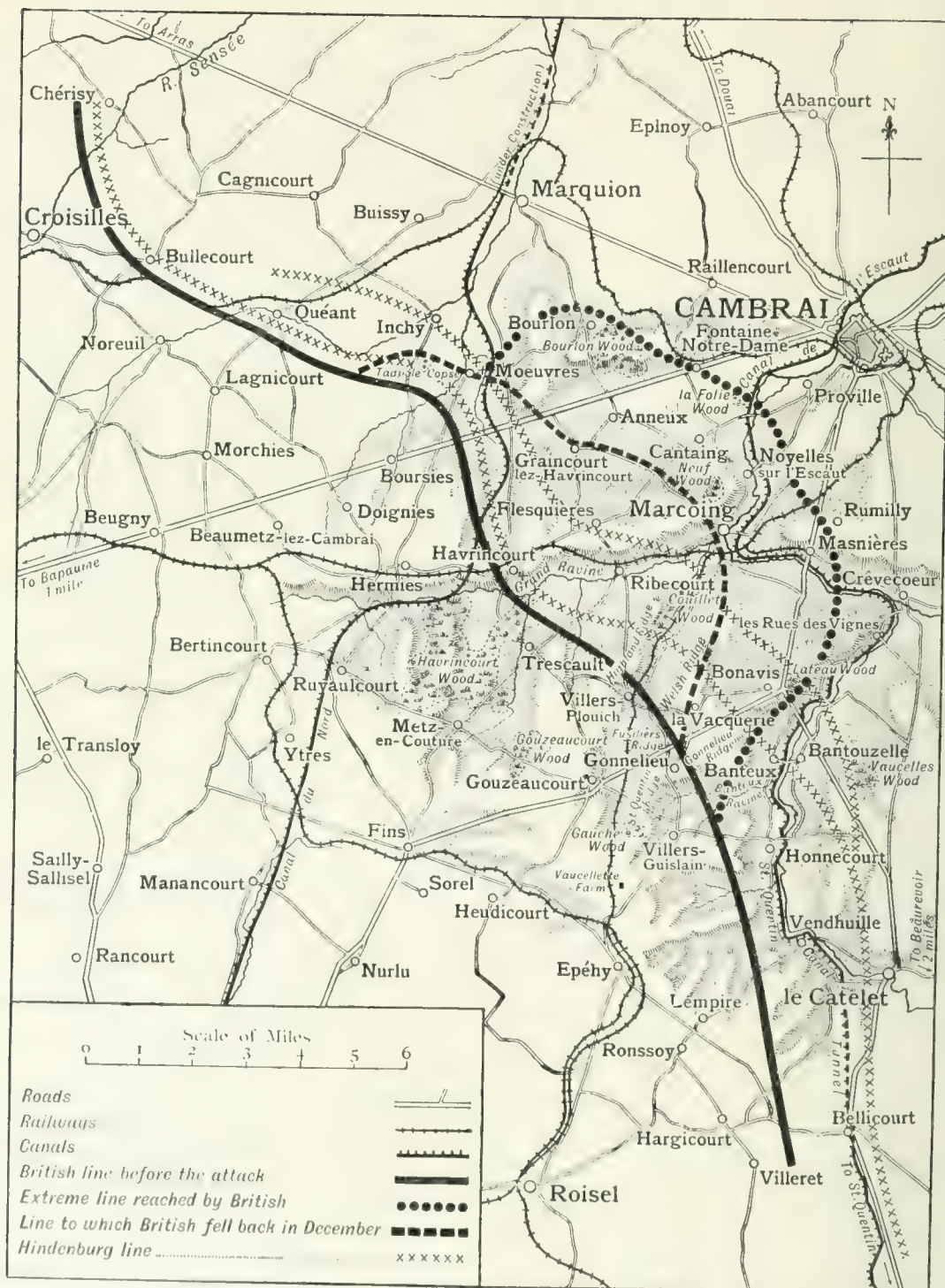
Canadian War Records

Canal our artillery had not been able to keep the pace set by the infantry; and these, though they went on without either tanks or guns, could not immediately clear the Germans out of the northern outskirts of the village. Consequently, other Germans were given the time and opportunity to filter back into Rumilly and the entrenched positions between Masnières and Beaufort. Furthermore, the cavalry was held up here.

Here was the check, or at any rate one of the checks, which robbed the "glänzendes Angriffs" of Cambrai of its

and riding down a body of German infantry. It stopped only when most of its horses had been killed or wounded, and then held on in a sunken road till nightfall. Then it came back, bringing prisoners with it, to the British lines.

When the early reports of the battle of Cambrai reached London on that November day it was freely rumoured that thousands of our cavalry had broken through. Sir Douglas Haig's dispatch makes it clear that they never had, and affords some explanation of why they had not. If the cavalry



Map illustrating the First Battle of Cambrai, November-December, 1917

Note: H.I. shading is shown only in the area covered by the sphere of the operations described.

dash into the open on the 20th of November, 1917, seems, therefore, to have been confined to the troopers from Fort Garry, the tale of the infantry's achievement is not yet completed; and it was in one section aided by cavalry, west of the Canal de l'Escaut, that patrols of the 6th Division had entered Noyelles sur l'Escaut, and, having been picked up by our cavalry there, pushed on with them towards Cantaing. West of Flesquières the 62nd Division, still pushing on, carried the Hindenburg Reserve line north of Havrincourt, and captured Graincourt. Cavalry and infantry entered the village of Anneux together, capturing howitzers and a battery of 5.9 guns, and went on fighting through the night of November 20-21. Sir Douglas Haig picked out the work of this division for special praise. It had completed an advance in the day of $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles from its original front, overrunning two German lines of defence and capturing three villages. The Ulstermen had done nearly as well: they had taken all the German trench systems west of the Canal du Nord as far north as the road from Bapaume to Cambrai.

The results of the day's operations are summed up as follows: Three German "systems of defence" — a more comprehensive term than "lines" or "trenches" — had been broken through on a wide front, and the penetration extended to a depth of between 4 and 5 miles; and 5000 prisoners had been taken. If there had been no check at Flesquières; if the bridges at Masnières had been secured; if, in short, the cavalry could have got

through, no one can say how much greater the results might have been. Sir Douglas Haig comments specially on the work the tanks did; he warmly praises the infantry and the airmen; he makes no comment, other than that already recorded, on the cavalry work.

The day's successes included one in the subsidiary attacks at other parts of the line where it was expedient to divert the enemy's attention. This was at Bullecourt, where portions of the 3rd Division and the 16th (Irish) Division took a section of the Hindenburg support trench in front of them, with some hundreds of prisoners.

There was time and opportunity next morning (November 21) to improve the ground won. Flesquières was attacked again at dawn, and by eight o'clock in the morning the Highland Territorials had worked their way round the north-west of the village and captured it. The Germans had been finally rushed out or cleared out of Masnières on the previous night, and, with the village as a pivot, Ulstermen, Yorkshiremen, and Highlanders attacked the Beaufort-Masnières line beyond. They got a tight hold on a portion of it to the north and east of Masnières, and beat off a heavy counter attack from Rumilly.

But German Head-quarters were already recovering from their surprise, and were pushing up more and more men. We captured Les Rues des Vignes, but could not hold it; and though we crossed the canal and made some headway towards Crève-cœur, the enemy's machine-gun fire held us off from the river. The machine-gun, as developed in the

warfare of 1917 and 1918, became a more revolutionary arm than the heavy gun and the high-explosive; it rendered the passage of a river incomparably more difficult. In and about villages the machine-gun nests were an unending source of trouble. West of the Canal de l'Escaut the infantry of the 29th Division had to fight all day for Noyelles, which East Lancshires took or retook three times. At the end of the day this division, which had some dismounted regiments of the 1st and 5th Cavalry Divisions, including the Ambala Brigade, had beaten off all attacks; but its momentum was checked. As at Rumilly, where the orders for a further advance were cancelled, the prospects of going on were not very bright.

At Flesquières the prospects of advance were better. From here the 51st Division and the 62nd (Highlanders), with tanks and squadrons of the 1st Cavalry Division, made a daring thrust towards Fontaine-notre-Dame and Bourlon. They completed their hold on Anneux, seized Cantaing, and closed in on Fontaine-notre-Dame in the late afternoon. The outskirts of Bourlon Wood were reached; the machine-guns secluded among the tree-stumps held the attackers off from the wood's recesses. Farther west the 36th Division was battling for Moeuvres when darkness closed down on a day of exhausting struggle.

The British line had been thrust forward like a blunt wedge into the enemy's position, but its rough edge had not pierced the high ground of Bourlon Wood and Bourlon village.

Both east and west of the wood the Germans maintained themselves in positions which made a further thrust of the edge of the wedge precarious—and the forty-eight hours which had been assigned to General Byng's operation were up. Should we go on, or should we stop? By going on we could not now expect any prize to fall into our lap such as might have been had if by great good luck the cavalry had got through. The German reinforcements were coming up on the uncut Cambrai railway every hour; we should have to fight hard for anything more we got.

But we could not stand pat, as the saying goes, on the hand we held. The positions won north of Flesquières were commanded by the high ground about Bourlon. To hold them would be to lose more in men than they were worth. They must be abandoned, and abandoned at once, unless the Bourlon Ridge were attacked and captured. That would be a useful capture, for it would afford observation over the northward slope to the Sensée River, and enable us to bombard the enemy's positions south of the Scarpe and Sensée Rivers both, besides bringing his communications with them under fire. Bourlon Wood seemed, in fact, a fine prize, and there were also signs that the enemy was nervously preparing to let it go. Sir Douglas Haig's dispatch (March 4, 1918), in reviewing these considerations, also makes it clear that he would not have been for a moment in two minds about it if his troops had been fresh. But they had done as much as could be expected of mortals; they

must have some days' rest before setting about the task of butting their way into a strong German position. It was a pity, for German reinforcements were coming up fast.

The heart of the problem which Sir Douglas Haig and Sir Julian Byng had to solve was whether Bourlon Ridge could be taken by the British on the spot before there were more Germans on the spot. They decided that it could; and their decision was influenced by two considerations, one of which was a tactical one, and the second of which was that dangerously intruding factor, a strategic-political one. The strategic-political consideration was that it might make a difference to the weight of the German blow at Italy if German troops were pinned down at Cambrai. The tactical consideration was that no operation on a great scale was now contemplated; Sir Douglas Haig only wished to create a salient towards the north-west in a favourable position, and would be content if on the Cambrai side this could be protected by a sound flank. He decided to go on.

Now arose a second point of importance in examining this action. The 22nd of November was spent in strengthening the ground won and in the relief and substitution of troops. While this was going on, the Germans made a counter-attack and regained Fontaine-notre-Dame on our flank. It was annoying, but did not seem of great importance, for it was held that its recapture would be effected without much difficulty, and could, in fact, be included in the new attack. The

Staff's eyes were turned with more interest to the other flank, where the Queen's Westminsters, by storming Tadpole Copse, a stronghold on the Hindenburg Line, west of Moeuvres, secured in advance protection for the holding of the Bourlon position when and if it should be occupied.

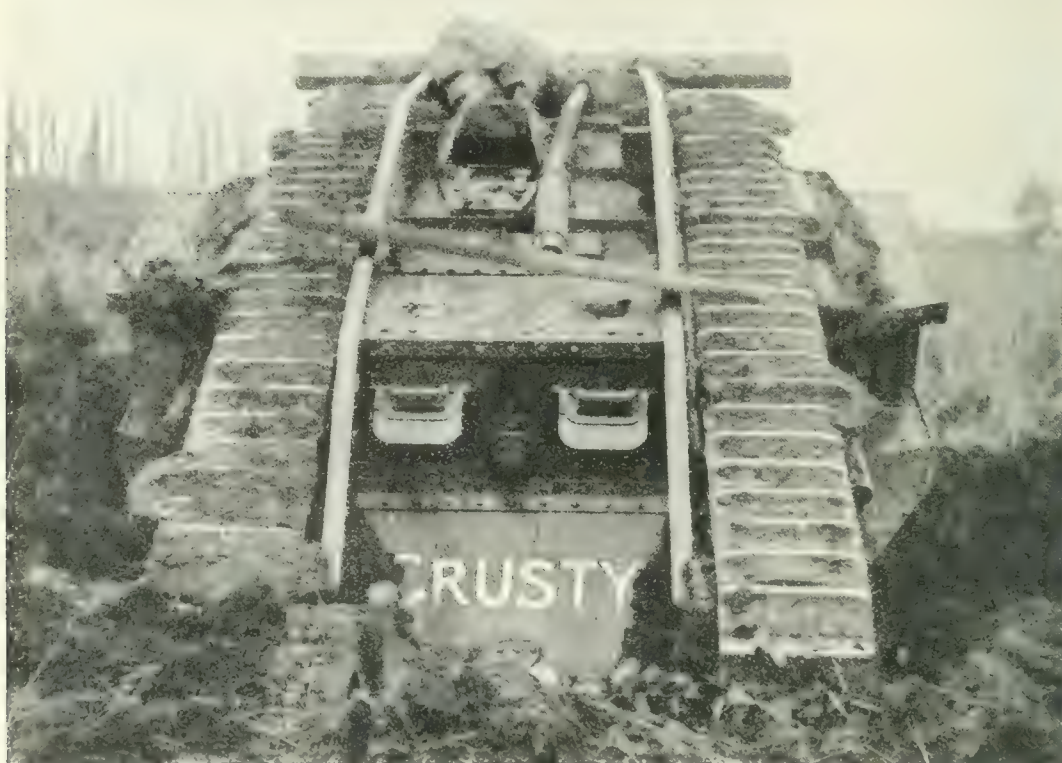
But when, as a preliminary next morning, Fontaine-notre-Dame was attacked by the 51st Division, the door was shut. Neither tanks nor men could make headway during the morning, though in the afternoon the tanks got into the village, doing a good deal of damage, but not clearing the enemy quite out. Fontaine-notre-Dame was going to prove a thorn in our side. But its possibilities seemed less alarming when the day's gains were considered. Bourlon Wood was taken, though the task occupied a costly four and a half hours of fighting on the part of the 40th Division; and even the invaluable tanks could not consolidate a hold on Bourlon village.

The Germans began to throw in counter-attacks, which went on at intervals for several days. The first of them, by all three battalions of the German 9th Grenadier Regiment, was repulsed, "bloodily repulsed", as the Germans would have said had the positions been reversed; but others followed, till, on the 25th of November, the 40th Division, which had borne the brunt of them, had to be relieved. This struggle for Bourlon reflected the highest credit on the English, Scottish, Welsh, and Irish battalions, who, together with dismounted cavalry, were fighting for every square foot they had gained. Sir Douglas Haig

selects for mention a counter-attack by Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, aided by dismounted Hussars (15th) and remnants of an infantry brigade (119th), which re-established the line on the 24th of November, when succeeding waves of Germans had over-

(13th Battalion) held out in the village by themselves till two days later (27th).

Meanwhile the German resistance had stiffened all over the face of the attack. The 36th Division, and the troops of the 56th London Territorials,



British Official Photograph

H.M. Landship Co. Ltd. in Action—one of the Tanks advancing over newly made shell-holes

lapped the wood's north-eastern corner. Yet another German attack was held up on the same day. Following it the infantry made a dash for Bourlon village, and for the first time captured the whole of it. They captured it, but could not secure it. Another German attack the next day took it back again, though some East Surreys

had found a task almost as hard as that at Bourlon in their fighting at Moeuvres and Tadpole Copse, though they made some progress. It became evident that while the enemy held the ridge above Fontaine-notre-Dame there was not much hope of improving our position in Bourlon Wood, or, indeed, at any point where it would

be permanently valuable. In fact, it was clear that we were now in for the usual slogging match, in which we could only match ourselves strength for strength against the German. On the 27th we did so, and sent forward the 62nd Division and the unfailing Guards in the effort to capture the whole ridge and Fontaine-notre-Dame as well. The Guards went into Fontaine-notre-Dame, the 62nd Division once more entered Bourslon village, but neither could stay there. They had to come back, though the Guards brought back some hundreds of prisoners.

The plain truth is that we had now no good jumping-off place, and no opportunity of further surprise; while the Germans could bring up man for man more reinforcements than we could. Five days of fighting had left us precariously sticking to what we had won, with no prospect of improving it without sacrifice. Cambrai had passed the experimental stage; and by the end of November the 10,000 prisoners we had captured, the 142 guns, the machine-guns, and the stores might have been taken to represent the gross total of what we had gained. It was not very likely that the net gain would increase.

More than that, it was becoming plain that the Germans would try to diminish it. They were bringing up more guns, more troops, more transport; they were busy registering ranges. They had little to gain from concealment; they gave us clear notice that they meant to try to evict us, and that the Bourslon sector was where they would strike. They would prob-

ably extend their counter-attack to Vendhuile. Preparations were accordingly made to stand up to the attack. The hard-trying divisions which had been fighting for Bourslon were relieved and replaced as far as possible. Five divisions were put to cover the Third Army's right flank from Cantaing to the Banteux Ravine, which is a distance of about 9 miles, and this seemed to be adequate provision against the contingencies of attack. From the Banteux Ravine southwards the line was held more thinly and weakly, but on the other hand the British positions here were well fortified, and had in fact been held for some months. They seemed safe enough. As reserves, to be sent to threatened points, were the Guards, who had done their share in laying hands on Fontaine, and the 62nd (West Riding Territorials), who had been hard-worked at Havrincourt. The 2nd Cavalry Division, which had dismounted to fight at Bourslon Wood, was also put in, and farther back were a hitherto unused South Midland Division and three cavalry divisions coming up. The forces seemed adequate for the purposes of defence, and, that there should be no mistake, the local commanders, especially from Villers - Guislain southward, were warned to be ready; machine-guns were massed at critical points, and the reserves hastened up.

In short, the Head-quarters Staff believed they had provided against surprise; nevertheless, it was surprise which brought about that set-back at Cambrai, which so deeply stirred public opinion at home. The enemy

came on between seven and eight o'clock of the dark and misty morning of November 30, and followed our precedent of attacking with very little artillery preparation. The German bombardment was furious enough to drive our men to shelter, but so short that they did not believe it to be the preliminary to assault, so that the Germans were on them before they knew the attack had begun.

The attack was spread over a 10-mile front—from Vendhuille to Masnières—but the places in which we were caught napping were the northern end of the Bonavis Ridge and the Gonnelleu sector. Here the Germans were all over our men right on to our guns before it was realized that the attack had started. Wild tales were told of commanders fleeing in their pyjamas; of battery-majors learning suddenly that the Germans were behind them instead of in front of them; and, without naming names, it is quite clear that some units were rattled into flight. There was every excuse for them; the Germans had been massed in great strength in folds of the ground; there was no creeping barrage to give warning of their approach, but instead of that a swarm of low-flying German aeroplanes imitating our aerial machine-gunning tactics. Smoke-bells intensified the mist, and



New Zealand Official Photograph

Examining a Captured German Anti-tank Gun

it was difficult for the troops in one portion of the field to know what the others were doing, or where they were standing.

Nevertheless, on the Masnières front, the 29th Division, composed of English, Scottish, Welsh, Irish, Guernsey, and Newfoundland battalions, fought magnificently all day in spite of being taken in reverse at one time by the break behind them farther south, and they held their lines intact. Even where the break-through occurred, isolated parties and machine-gun detachments fought fiercely and desperately. North-east of La Vacquerie the 92nd Field Artillery Brigade broke up four assaults, one of which got up to 200 yards from the guns, and when the few that were left of the gunners were obliged to withdraw they took their breech-blocks with them.

The troops east of Villers-Guislain

stuck to their line even when Germans were swarming up the valley behind them; and south of the village one post added new lustre to its name of "Limerick", by sticking to it all day. It was garrisoned by the 1/5th Battalion (King's Own) Royal Lancaster Regiment, and the 1/10th Battalion Liverpool Regiment. These acts of isolated gallantry were unavailing to stop the enemy from getting over the Bonavis Ridge, and from turning our positions on the ridge and in the villages of Gonnelleu and Villers-Guislain. All were lost; Gouzeaucourt followed at nine o'clock in the morning, and the Germans then began to close on La Vacquerie. Guns, of course, were lost, including some which had been brought up close to our battle-front to protect the line from Masnières to Marcoing.

But the disaster now began to

approach its limits. The hard-trying, unfailing Guards came into action while the more distant reserve divisions were hurried up at their top speed. The Guards drove the enemy out of Gouzeaucourt. They drove them beyond it, and got into the St. Quentin ridge, east of the village. It is only right to say that they were helped by a party of the 29th Division, who, with a company of North Midland Royal Engineers, held on all day to an old trench near Gouzeaucourt and could not be shifted. Behind the Guards a brigade of artillery (47th Division) came straight off the march into action. So did three battalions of tanks, which had been about to move off to refit, but joyfully plunged again into the fray at Gouzeaucourt when they heard they were wanted. No need to say whether they were welcome.

This was the attack which enabled the Germans to claim Cambrai as a victory. But if the whole battlefield be surveyed, that is a term which requires modification. The German attack on the northern area, from Fontaine-notre-Dame to Tadpole Copse, was their main effort, and it achieved no more success than was to be expected of an assault delivered with very large forces and pushed regardless of losses. It was of an



An Official Photograph

In One of the German Machine-gun Emplacements

These emplacements were built with slabs of concrete, supported by heavy timber.

entirely different character from the Villers-Guislain surprise. It started two hours after the first; it was heralded by a heavy bombardment, and accompanied by the regulation barrage. Lastly, the Germans advanced in masses, just as they had done long ago in the First Battle of Ypres. They sought to bear us down by weight and by persistence. In one sector no fewer than eleven waves of German infantry dashed themselves against the London Territorials; along the whole front no fewer than five distinct attacks were made during that short November day. The divisions which bore the brunt of it were the 47th (London Territorials), the 2nd Division, and the 56th London Territorials.

Sir Douglas Haig mentions in his dispatch several out of many deeds of heroism. There was that of a company of the 17th Battalion Royal Fusiliers, who were actually being withdrawn when the storm broke. The officer in command sent three platoons back to safety. With the remainder he fought a rear-guard action and held off the Germans till the main position behind had been organized—and till, also, he and his men were killed, fighting where they stood. . . . A company of the 13th Battalion Essex Regiment found themselves isolated in a trench between the Canal du Nord and Moeuvres. They stuck it out all day, thereby taking pressure off the line behind. Just before dark fell they held a Council of War, at which were present the two company officers who had not been killed, the company sergeant-major, and the platoon ser-

geants. They also determined to "fight on". They sent two runners back to Battalion Head-quarters to say so; and that was the last heard of them, except that far into the night their machine-guns and, last of all, their rifles went on firing. They never surrendered. . . . Nor did three of the posts in Bourlon Wood, held by a company of the 1st Battalion Royal Berks Regiment. They stood unmoving, unmoved, immovable, and when, two days later, the posts which they had defended were regained, such a heap of German dead lay around them that the bodies of our own men were hidden.

It was this spirit, joined to the resolution common to all the troops along this sector, which averted disaster and made the enemy pay the highest price for the success which he had. The German waves were enfiladed by machine-gun fire; their masses were scattered by our guns, which once were brought right up to the crest line to fire into them at short range. One battery of eight machine-guns loosed off 70,000 rounds of ammunition into ten successive waves of a German attack. Only at one point, and at one time, did the German attack approach the appearance of getting home. The weight of their attack west of Bourlon once got to the crest of the ridge and over it; but the survivors withered under the direct fire of our artillery and were thrown back by the local reserve. They tried again at the same point and made a gap between two battalions of the 1/6th Battalion and 1/15th Battalion London Regiments.

But counter-attacks led by the battalion commanders, who threw even the personnel of head-quarters into the fray, closed the gap again. One gallant officer of the 6th London, though already wounded in the earlier

Next day the struggle flared up again, and now we attacked as the surest means of defence. The Guards retook all the St. Quentin ridge, and fought their way again into Gonnellieu. The tanks helped here and farther south, where they co-operated with dismounted Indian cavalry and with the Guards in capturing Gauche Wood; Villers-Guislain, though approached by the tanks, could not be reached by infantry.

At Masnières the 29th Division again sustained, and again beat off, the most pertinacious German attacks (nine of them in all), and other attacks were repelled at Marcoing, Fontaine-notre-Dame, and Bourlon. But, brave and determined as was the advance, it clearly could not go on for ever while Bonavis Ridge was in the enemy's hands, for Masnières was too exposed, so that in the night our lines were withdrawn to the west of the village. A further withdrawal became necessary next day, as fresh German attacks developed against La Vacquerie; and indeed it was clear that if the enemy pushed farther on towards Welsh Ridge, here more of the ground we had won must be ceded.

Gonnellieu was given up; La Vacquerie fell, and our line was withdrawn in conformity. The enemy had nearly shot his bolt; but his persistence in attack towards Welsh Ridge was not exhausted, and it was quite clear to Sir Douglas Haig that while our right flank was precariously situated towards the Bonavis Ridge, we stood to lose more than could be gained by holding on.

Moreover, Bonavis Ridge could



Captured German "O.P."

A Captured German "O.P."

This was a hollow observation post, covered with bark and foliage, as a tree trunk. One of our men may be dimly seen in the photograph looking through the second aperture.

fighting, now insisted on leaving the dressing-station, and, returning to his men, fell mortally wounded at their head. At the end of the day the line stood where it had fought, and fought where it stood. It is to be noted that French reserves were sent up to help us, but were not needed.

only be gained by another pitched battle. He decided that the game was not worth the candle. He must withdraw to the Flesquières Ridge. This was done. On the night of December 4-5 the evacuation of Bourlon Wood, by now full of gas from

advanced lines and arrived there, having done more damage than it sustained.

To sum up: the Third Army had captured 12,000 yards of the former German front line from La Vacquerie to Boursies, together with 10,000



Inspecting One of the German Trenches after its Capture by the British Troops

the enemy's gas-shells, and all the ground north of Flesquières Ridge, was carried out, and by the morning of the 7th we were in new and strong positions. The withdrawal was not altogether without incident. A covering party of the 1/15th Battalion London Regiment (47th Division), which had already distinguished itself, found itself enveloped and cut off. But it cut its way through to our

yards of the Hindenburg lines, and the three villages—Ribecourt, Havrincourt, and Flesquières. It had captured 11,000 German prisoners and 145 guns. On the debit side, it had lost prisoners and guns of its own in the flank surprise attack, and had had to fight a heavy and exhausting action for a fortnight, of which the last week was the hardest.

E. S. G.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE COLLAPSE OF RUSSIA

(August, 1917, to February, 1918)

Delirium—The Moscow Conference—Kerensky and Korniloff—Kerensky and Lenin—The Bolshevik Policy—The Advance of the Germans in the North—The Gulf of Riga and the Islands—The Armistice and the Negotiations for Peace in Brest-Litovsk—The breaking off of the Negotiations—Renewal of the German Advance—The Surrender of Russia.

WE left the story of the war on the eastern frontiers of the Central Powers¹ at that moment in August, 1917, when the Russian Army fell into a paroxysm of hysteria and fled headlong, being driven by its own delusions far more than by the forces of its enemy. An ingenious thinker once propounded a curious question. He asked whether, seeing that no man is absolutely safe against madness, it is not conceivable that all the men in a nation should become insane at one and the same time. He added that he found it impossible to account for the conduct of some peoples at certain crises of their history on any other supposition. If Bishop Butler, who made this odd remark, could have witnessed the events in Russia in 1917, we may be sure that his belief in the possibility of a universal and simultaneous national delirium would have been strengthened.

The people—or perhaps we ought to say the peoples—of Russia must be understood to have been given up to strong delusion and to believe a lie. The causes which produced this pitiable spectacle have been already

detailed. Here we can only note the fact that, during the period with which we are now dealing, Russia fell under the control of men who believed all government to be an evil. Those Russians who could not accept this wild doctrine were as sheep without a shepherd. At the beginning of August, 1917, the supposed representative of "Government" in Russia was Kerensky.

It is but just to allow that foreign critics who called on him to bring order out of anarchy, and conduct the war with vigour, were asking for the impossible. Governments are not to be made by wishing them made. The elements out of which they can be constructed must exist, and in Russia at that time they were wholly lacking. Kerensky, and those about him, must be supposed to have desired to secure the victory of the Revolution. But to the mass of the inhabitants of Russia, except the minority which had wealth to lose, the victory of the Revolution meant the abolition of all government, the sweeping away of the machinery of administration, and a wholesale transfer of real and personal property from the "Haves" to the "Have nots". The workmen

¹ See Chapter XI.

and peasants might well ask who made Kerensky judge in Israel? He was simply the most eloquent, or even only the most audible, stump orator, standing on the highest stump at Petrograd for the time being. He and his like were politicians of a type which figures for a space in all

the ranks are prepared to obey their generals, as Spanish soldiers have followed their officers in innumerable *pronunciamientos*. But no such instinct of obedience existed in the Russian army. The trained soldiers had been swept away. The ranks were full of mere peasants, who shared



Photograph by Scotland Liddel

The Red Flag in the Russian Army: a camp scene behind the Russian lines

revolutions. They were prepared to level down to themselves, but not to level up.

There were men in Russia who were by no means persuaded that the victory had been won when a few talkative lawyers were in possession of all the offices. A strong military government might have saved Russia from anarchy. But a military government must be based on a principle. It can exist only where the men in

the sentiments of their class and who had not served long enough nor under conditions to make it possible for them to acquire a military character. These men also were ready to ask a general, who called upon them to follow him, the unanswerable question: "Who made *you* judge in Israel?" Russian generals had no authority apart from what was conferred on them by their commission from the Tsar. But the Tsar's Government

had been destroyed with the aid of some of them, and the acquiescence of others. Therefore the authority of the generals had vanished. Nor is it rational to ignore the fact that the talking revolutionists and the generals were natural enemies. A military government might have pulled Russia together, but it would certainly have made short work of Kerensky and the talkers. The unavoidable rivalry between the two, the impotence of generals whose soldiers would not obey, and then the flimsy quality of the authority possessed by eloquent revolutionists who had no military force at command, were all demonstrated with rapidity and thoroughness during the autumn of 1917.

Kerensky could form what he was pleased to call a National Ministry. It was composed in the main of men—Nehrasoff, Tchernoff, Pietchekhonoff, and others—who were like-minded to himself on the essential point. They wished to stop the Revolution so soon as it had reached the limit at which they had gained all they wanted. Of course nobody in Russia—neither the generals on the one hand, nor the root-and-branch men inspired by Lenin and Trotsky on the other—could see any principle which made it morally incumbent on them to follow the National Ministry for one moment longer than they saw occasion.

The All Russia Conference met at Moscow, and was addressed by Kerensky on August 25 in an eloquent speech. The revolutionary leader exhorted his hearers to remain united, and said much which would have been heard with universal approval if the

Revolution had really been intended to do no more than sweep out a corrupt and oppressive bureaucracy. But the passage of his oration which was shown before long to have made the deepest impression was that in which he declared that "any attempt to take advantage of the Conference to attack the national power as embodied in the Provisional Government would be pitilessly repressed by blood and iron". The speech, though applauded as eloquent, was found to have caused much disappointment. Kerensky's tone was high. He spoke as if he had a divine right. He would hear of no separate peace. It is to be observed that about this time, or not long afterwards, he told an American journalist that though Russia would not go out of the war it was worn out, and had—so he is reported to have said—been fighting for a year and a half longer than Great Britain.

The Conference was brought in contact with the facts of the case by the visit of General Korniloff. Korniloff had succeeded Brussiloff and Dmitrieff in the desperate post of Commander-in-Chief. He described the growing anarchy of the army, and appealed for the adoption of vigorous measures to restore discipline. He spoke as any honourable military gentleman, driven to despair by the shame of his position, would have spoken. His case was unanswerable by argument. But it was ruined by the no less unanswerable fact that the measures he advocated could not be taken save by making the generals masters of Russia. And to that the Revolutionary leaders were passion-

ately opposed. What was worse for General Korniloff was that his own soldiers were quite as much his opponents as were Kerensky and his colleagues.

We may pass over the eloquence of the Conference which resounded—and

by “blood and iron”. On September 8 he sent a message to Kerensky by the hand of “Vladimir Nicolaievitch Lvoff, member of the Duma”. It was a peremptory demand that “the national power, as embodied in the Provisional Govern-



The Revolutionary Parliament in Russia in 1917: photograph in the Duma during one of the sittings, showing the empty frame which had contained the portrait of the Tsar

died away. The sharp and decisive collision between Kerensky and Korniloff was a substantial reality. The Commander-in-Chief returned to his post persuaded, as his acts amply show, that no good would be done until the Provisional Government of dreamers and talkers had been relegated to a lunatic asylum—if necessary

ment”, should abdicate in favour of its Commander-in-Chief, and the army as represented by the officers. - It is not an unimportant fact that an increase of pay for the officers was one of the reforms which Korniloff had advocated in the Duma. But the officers no longer represented the Russian army. Kerensky, after obtain-

ing from Korniloff, by means of a telephone message, a full confirmation of the demand presented by Lvoff, dismissed the Commander-in-Chief, and appointed General Kemborsky to succeed him.

When the recollections of those who took part in the ensuing tragi-comedy have been published, the world may learn the truth as to the details of a deplorable failure. Each party appealed to force. Kerensky called on all friends of the Revolution to stand by him. It is plain that he did not exclude the root-and-branch men of Lenin and Trotsky. They had sufficient good sense not to make the mistake of looking on in the hope that one of their enemies would destroy the other—which might well have left them in the presence of a confident victor. The Provisional Government demonstrated its worthlessness by abdicating in favour of Kerensky, and making him dictator. Korniloff also appealed to force in the shape of battalions on which he thought he could rely—mostly, so it seems, men from outlying parts of the Russian Empire, the so-called Savages. He seems also to have looked for aid to the Cossacks under their Hetman Kaledin. But the sword stuck in the scabbard. Neither the soldiers nor the Cossacks were found to be trustworthy when they were fairly in face of "the Revolution". General Korniloff's *pronunciamiento* collapsed by its own weakness. He was compelled to surrender on September 14. Next day a republic was proclaimed, and Kerensky was left face to face with the root-and-branch men—the Bol-

sheviks—whom he had been forced to ask to help him.

All who have some knowledge of the normal course of revolutions could foresee that a collision between the relatively moderate men, led by Kerensky, and the extremists behind Lenin, could not be long deferred. Nor was it difficult to judge as to



General Korniloff, dismissed by Kerensky from his post as Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Army.

which of the two had the better chance to win. As the army had been reduced to a mere mob, largely by Kerensky himself, the parties had to fight one another with such forces as they could recruit. It was eminently probable that the victors would be those who were prepared to make the highest number of the most tempting promises to the largest mob. And there could be no question that the Bolsheviks had the advantage in this respect. Those soldiers who had not

already done half their work for them by deserting and going home, but who had remained in the ranks (if that term has any meaning in such a case), were on their side. Kerensky's dictatorship, which could not dictate, lived from the middle of September till November 7. On that day those forces of anarchy which were not disposed to stop just at the place convenient to the moderate men, but were resolved to enter into possession of the promised new heaven and new earth, broke out in destructive fury. The fugleman on this occasion was Trotsky, President of the Petrograd Workmen's Council, who now declared that the Provisional Government was dissolved, and that the Ministers were to be arrested. Lenin, who had been during the past weeks in the background, now reappeared, and openly reassumed his position as leader.

If a clear head and a resolute will confer the right to command, Lenin was in his natural place. He knew what he wanted, and how it was to be obtained. No one in our time, unless we make an exception for our own General Gordon, has shown in a more eminent degree the rare but very effective combination of the dreamer, or even fanatic, with the man of action. Different as they were in all else, there was this much in common between them. It would be idle to waste words in demonstrating to our readers that Lenin has been mischievous. From his own fanatical point of view he was engaged in doing the one thing necessary—in abolishing the oppression inseparable as he maintained from the

rule of the few over the many, and in transferring property from the rich to the poor. Being also a practical man, he saw that peace was the indispensable preliminary to the carrying out of his plan of social revolution. Nor does it appear to be doubtful that, when he decided that the war must cease, he was in a very real sense the true representative of Russian opinion. Foreign residents who were nowise in sympathy with him were forced to acknowledge that the Russians in general were convinced that they could fight no longer.

So when Lenin announced that he aimed first at the termination of the war he was in no danger of meeting strong opposition. He would have dismissed with scorn all expostulation based on the dishonour of making peace, or the ultimate harm which a surrender to Germany must do to Russia. War as he saw it was a device by which oppressors and self-seekers secured their own power and profit. The example which Russia was about to set up by creating a just social order would, he argued, infallibly be imitated in Germany when the eyes of its people were opened, and would do more to destroy the military government of the Hohenzollerns than any defeat in the field. Lenin laid it down that the second object he aimed at was the occupation of all land by the peasants; and the third was the "termination of the economic crisis", by the transfer, no doubt, of all industrial property to the workmen.

Nor can there be any reasonable doubt that here also he spoke as the true

representative of the desires of a great numerical majority of the inhabitants of Russia. His claim to state the will of the country was proved by the very trifling degree of resistance he met. A few Government officials, among those who had not already been driven to flight, or slain, refused to follow him. But what was that to a man who meant to abolish all administration, all laws and law courts, and the very Church itself? In the army there was hardly a murmur of opposition. Korniloff had fallen helplessly before Kerensky. He had been left to wait for his trial under charge of his successor Dukhonin, by whose connivance, as it was said with every appearance of probability, he was allowed to escape. Dukhonin, who refused to open negotiations with the Germans for an armistice, was deposed, and was murdered by his own soldiers. A touch of farce was added to the melodrama by the appointment as Commander-in-Chief of a certain Krylenko, a middle-aged man of obscure past, who was at the time cornet in a cavalry regiment.

In recording these consequences of the outbreak of November 7, we have overshot its immediate result, the overthrow and disappearance of Kerensky. The unlucky dictator fled before the mob, which, with the help of some of the war-ships, mastered Petrograd and sacked the Winter Palace. He betook himself to Tzarsko Selo, whence he informed the world by means of wireless telegraphy that the "liquidation of the Bolshevik or anarchist adventure would be only an affair of days". That was on Sunday,

November 11. On Tuesday the 13th he was swept out of Tzarsko Selo by the Bolshevik Commander-in-Chief, and disappeared, till he turned up again, in the summer of 1918, as a refugee in London.

It is manifest that a country in convulsions of hot fever could not conduct war—and particularly when all kinds of Russians were intent on quite other purposes. From the beginning of August, 1917, till the victory of the Bolsheviks in early November, the Germans, aided in a subordinate way by the Austrians, had advanced all along the line. In the south they had struck into the Ukraine and had driven back the Roumanians. On the centre they went on till it suited them to stop. We will, however, leave these two scenes of the war for the present, to narrate a series of operations in the north which were of the most decisive kind.

The northern or right flank of the Russian line had been a weak point from the beginning of the war. And the weakness was due to the fact that the German fleet had always exercised an effective control over the waters of the Baltic. Its command had not indeed been quite undisputed. So long as Russia retained the services of a squadron which included powerful ships, there was a possibility that some use might be made of it in combination with any attempt which might be made by the British fleet to enter the Baltic. And this constituted a menace which Germany could not afford to neglect. A large part of its navy was at all times told off to watch the Russians, and was therefore to be deducted from

the force which could be used in the North Sea.

In addition to this latent threat, there was at all times, when the winter did not close the middle and upper Baltic, something to be guarded against in the form of attacks by active cruisers or submarines. British submarines took a prominent part in such operations. German war-ships were damaged, and in some cases destroyed. German trade with Sweden was hampered, though never quite suspended. But the superiority of the German fleet in those waters was not materially affected. The Russian fleet, even with the help of such British submarines—and the number was not insignificant—as entered the Baltic, was never able to carry out serious operations against the German coasts. There never was a time since August, 1914, when, while the Baltic was free from ice, the Germans could not have concentrated a sufficient naval force to convey and to cover an army which could have been landed behind the northern end of the Russian line.

The venture was, indeed, not made till September and October, 1917, but the explanation of this delay may no doubt be found in the fact that the demands of the war in other regions were too pressing to allow the German Government to spare the men needed in sufficient number to render the turning movement effective. The rapid spread of anarchy after the fall of the Tsar's Government gave Germany the desired opportunity. All through the summer of 1917 it had become steadily more notorious that the Russian troops which covered

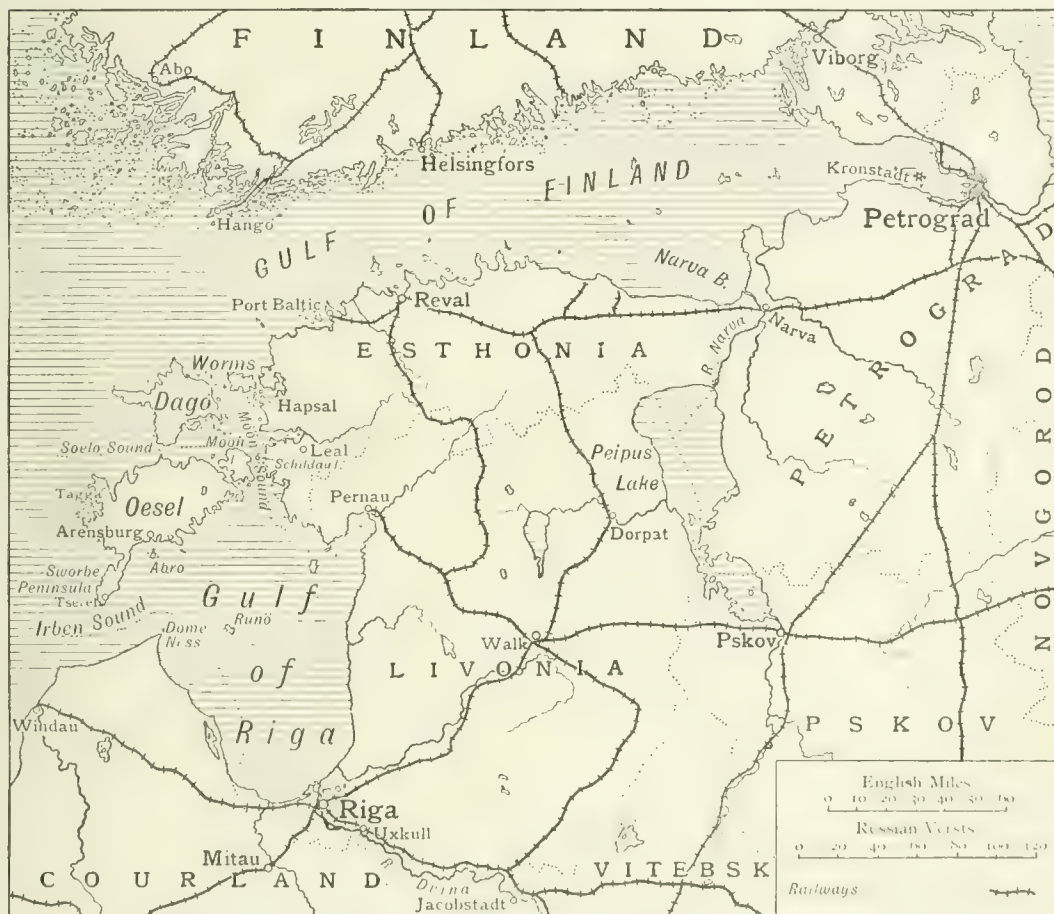
Riga were not to be trusted. Their discipline was lost, and they fraternized with the enemy. They would probably have given way before a vigorous front attack. But it was more effective and more economical to turn them by a combined naval and military movement, in which the superiority of the German fleet would have its full influence.

A reference to the map will show the advantage which Germany must obtain by a successful operation of this character. If we take the Gulf of Riga as the centre from which to survey the whole field, the situation explains itself. The Gulf may be described as a bag open to the north. The eastern side belongs to Livonia, and the western to Courland. The two provinces meet on the southern side, where the River Dvina, which flows from south-east to north-west, falls into the Gulf. The important trading city of Riga stands near the mouth of the Dvina. The railway connecting Riga with Petrograd runs along the eastern side of the Gulf, and is liable to be cut by a naval force which commands the water. Though the Gulf of Riga is not barred on the north by the mainland, the sea is not quite open in that direction. The Island of Oesel lies across the entry. The peninsula of Sworbe juts out like a long fringe from the south-west of Oesel and points toward Dome Ness, the most northerly extremity of Courland. The Irben passage, between Sworbe and Dome Ness, gives access to the Gulf.

Though it is nowhere very deep, and the waters on the sides are both

shallow and foul, it can be used by big ships. Oesel is very far from being the only island on the coast. There are many, and indeed islets and projecting rocks or banks abound along the shore of most parts of the

coasting craft. It is obvious that if a naval force were caught by an enemy of superior strength while in the Gulf of Riga it could not escape destruction if properly attacked. There is no place of refuge in the Gulf. Riga is not



Map illustrating the Operations in the Gulf of Riga, and their Relation to Petrograd and Finland

Baltic. As a rule they are small, but Dagö, which lies to the north of Oesel, is of some size. The waters between the two, and between them and the mainland, are shallow, and much pestered by rocks and sands. They cannot be used by vessels of any size greater than that of small

sufficient, for the river is not deep; the eastern and western sides are formed by low ground with no openings, and shallow water. There is no escape to the north between the islands and the mainland for large vessels. The line of communication between the Gulfs of Riga and of Finland is through

the Irben passage, and by the west of Oesel and Dagö.

It is no less obvious that whoever can seize those islands can use them as a basis of operations for the purpose of turning the flank of an army which might be trying to hold the line of the Dvina. The broken and shallow waters about them would present a lesser obstacle than many rivers. The islands would be equally available as a basis of operations for an invader who wished to strike to the north-east in the direction of the Gulf of Finland and Petrograd. This line of advance was so manifestly advantageous to the Germans that their long abstinence from making use of it cannot be explained except by their inability to withdraw men in sufficient numbers from other regions. When the German advance was at last made possible it began in the early days of September, rose to a great height in October, was suspended for a time, and then resumed in February of 1918.

The advance of the Germans against Riga on land became pronounced about August 19, just before the meeting of the Conference at Moscow. They met with no real resistance. On September 1 they crossed the Dvina at Uexküll, and on the following day they occupied the town. Riga is not a modern fortress, and is largely German in character. In all the three Baltic Provinces, Livonia (which we formerly called Livland), Esthonia (or Estland), and Courland, the moneyed classes are of German origin, the descendants of ancient colonies. When the enemy had passed

the river at this point he had outflanked the Russians on the right bank of the Dvina. Apart, therefore, from the untrustworthy quality of the troops under their command, the Russian generals had good reasons for falling back. Difficulties of transport in a country which is ill provided with roads did far more to delay the Germans than any opposition which the Russian soldiers could be induced to offer. Jacobstadt, on the Dvina above Riga, was not occupied by them till September 20. In the meantime their wider and decisive flanking movement was beginning to develop.

From the middle of September German light naval craft and air-ships were constantly engaged in reconnaissances, and in harassing the Russians in the Irben Channel and on the western coasts of the islands. Their air raids met with considerable success. On October 1 they blew up a magazine at Tserel, north of the Gulf of Riga, and did other damage near Pernau on the east. The Russians retaliated by counter-attacks on German posts in Courland. Enemy trawlers were detected while removing mines in the Irben Channel. The Russians could claim to have driven them off. It is well, however, to bear in mind that minor operations of this class are habitually described by one side as reconnaissances, and by the other as repulses. The great German combined attack took place on October 12.

On that day a powerful German fleet, which is said to have included ten Dreadnoughts, of which some were of the newest, or *Kaiser* and *König* class, covered and cleared the way for

a landing force of troops. The disembarkation took place at Tagga, on the north-west of the Island of Oesel. It was a perfectly safe operation. The German fleet was in such strength that it could make simultaneous attacks in the Soële Sound or passage, which is between Oesel and Dagö to the north, and also on the Irben passage, which is between Oesel and Courland to the south. Such Russian ships as were about the islands, or in the Gulf of Riga, were hemmed in, and there was no fear of interruption from the sea.

We may leave the troops engaged in taking possession of their landing-place, and preparing for a further advance, while we follow the naval operations to their end. It was the German fleet which gave the army the means of acting. If the Russians could have barred the Soële and Irben passages, still more if they could have taken the offensive, and if (a very important *if* indeed in this case) the Russian soldiers had fought resolutely, the Germans landed at Tagga might have congratulated themselves if they had been able to get on board again and escape. But none of these conditions existed. On October 17, after engagements with batteries, and, as we must suppose, at least some mine-sweeping, the Germans forced their way through both passages. It is equally permissible to draw two widely different deductions from the patent fact of their success. They may have made their way in because their trawlers had effectually cleared the waters of mines. But in view of what had happened, and was then happening on the Russian side,

it would not be rash to assume that some at least of the defenders failed in the discharge of their duty.

In this, as in other parts of the war in the east of Europe, the Germans availed themselves to the utmost of the dissensions and the treasons which abounded among their opponents. They had good reasons for believing that they would not meet with formidable opposition. Yet we are bound to note that although the Russian navy had been active on the side of the Revolution, and although the ships have been the scenes of some most atrocious crimes, there does not appear to have been any example of such ignominious co-operation with the national enemy as has been but too common in the army. Admiral Dakhireff, who was in command, bore testimony to the gallantry of the crews during these operations. It is true that he was not free to assert the contrary. An officer by sea or land, whose sad fate it is to command when mutiny and disaffection are rife, must shut his eyes to much. He can often do no good, and can only put his own life in peril, by revealing faults which he has not the power to prevent or to punish. He may even hope to inspire the virtue with which he is compelled to credit his subordinates, however unworthy they may be of the praise.

Even, however, if the Russian naval forces did their duty to the utmost, their position was desperate. We have no trustworthy report of what the respective numbers of the contending forces were. The Germans spoke of twenty Russian "war-ships" as en-

gaged in the attempt to bar the Irben passage. But this is one of the most equivocal of terms. A destroyer or a mere torpedo-boat is a "war-ship" as much as a Dreadnought. But it is not a match for one. What is beyond question is that the German squadron which entered the Gulf of Riga between Sworbe and Dome Ness was more than a match for its opponent in the number and individual weight of its component parts. The Russians were driven back towards the Möön passage on the north. But then they were forced under the guns of those German ships which had entered between Dagö and Oesel. Their destruction was inevitable. It is impossible to be sure of more than the main lines of the action. We know that the *Slawa* (13,500 tons), a pre-Dreadnought, launched in 1903, was driven ashore and battered to pieces by the longer-ranged German guns. The enemy claims to have destroyed four other Russian vessels. The rest of the defeated fleet is said to have escaped to the north by the Möön passage. If so, they must have been small craft.

Now one of two things must certainly be true. Either the total Russian force must have been very small, or if a considerable part of them could escape after their enemy had entered the passage, then the Germans can have but little to boast of. Their management must have been very bad, for in such circumstances not one of the Russians ought to have escaped. This of course applies only to the larger vessels. The smaller might possibly have got away through the

shallows on the coast of the mainland. The fog of war has been nowhere thicker than in the Baltic. It covers even the loss of the Germans. We hear of small craft of theirs which ran on mines before, during, and after the decisive operation of October 17. We are told of a German Dreadnought which was believed to have been torpedoed by a British submarine. But the utmost uncertainty covers all these tales. They are often given on the authority of "an eye-witness". We are not, however, told what opportunity he had to observe, nor can we judge of his credibility. The ultimate result alone is certain. The Russian naval forces were swept from the Gulf of Riga, and from about the islands.

We have slightly forestalled the course of events in order to follow the decisive naval operation to the end. Contemporary movements ashore may be dismissed briefly. They present a now familiar, but always disgusting story. No genuine resistance was made by the Russian troops stationed in Oesel. It was occupied by the 16th, and by the 20th the whole group of islands, Oesel, Möön, Dagö, Schildau, Abro, and Runö, together with the fortress at Arensburg, were in possession of the Germans, who could boast that they had taken 20,000 prisoners, 100 great guns, and large quantities of military stores at a very trifling cost to themselves.

They were now in a position from which they could advance whenever they had made the necessary preparations, and saw their advantage in another forward movement. But they waited for a time.

They cannot have failed to know that the conflict between Kerensky and the Bolsheviks was about to become acute. They saw Russia falling to pieces, Finland breaking away in the north, and the Ukraine taking its own course in the south. There was no possibility of a Russian offensive, and even no need of exertions

fixing their hold on the Baltic Provinces, making roads, which they appear to have done diligently, and transferring such troops as they could now spare to the Western Front? The very distress which prevailed in northern Russia was a sufficient guarantee that they had nothing to fear from that quarter. All communication with



The Break-up of the Russian Army: Cossacks on the march

of theirs to hasten the disintegration, which was advancing headlong under the impulse of stimulants applied from within the unhappy country. They had but to look on while the Bolsheviks destroyed Kerensky, while a feeble effort to set up an alternative government at Dukhonin's headquarters was brutally suppressed by mutinous soldiers, while events of a somewhat mysterious kind were taking place among the Cossacks. Why should they not apply themselves to

the fertile wheat-producing regions of the south had been suspended, and "Great Russia", the Russia of Moscow, was on the verge of starvation.

If they had made these calculations, as indeed it is very clear that they did, they were thoroughly justified by the result. Lenin and his lieutenant Trotsky were no sooner in possession of power than they began to work for peace. It is not easy for us, who found ourselves deprived of an ally, to judge them with absolute equity.

Yet it is but critical to remember that the real question is, what could any body of men on whom lay the task of governing Russia have done in the circumstances as they then were? By the fault of many men in successive generations the country had been

Allies. But this was a sacrifice which could have been expected only from a united people, which was prepared to count all suffering little if only the invader could be worn out. It was not to be expected from one which was in a state of division, not only as



Discussing the Situation in the Russian Trenches

brought to a state in which it could no longer conduct a regular war. It must either yield to the Germans or continue the struggle by suffering only. By removing the seat of government farther and farther to the east, and forcing the Germans to employ a great host to take possession of their land, the Russians might have done a material service to the

between part and part, but also as between class and class.

The Russian peasant was intent on getting hold of the soil. The Russian workman believed he could obtain command of the means of production. Both desired a cessation of the war that they might apply themselves to their hearts' desire. Other classes longed for peace because the conduct

of war had become impossible. It was a terrible spectacle, an awful warning of what the results of unwisdom and injustice can be. Men have asked where the barbarians who could destroy modern civilization can come from. Russia has shown that a callous and unwise "civilization" can make its destructive barbarians within itself.

We must recognize, if we mean to look at the evidence, that when the Bolsheviki began by calling on all the Allies to agree to an armistice, they represented the wish of Russia. If the Allies would agree, so much the better; if they would not, then the Russians would act for themselves. The decision was no doubt cheerfully taken by fanatics who were intent on quite other things than fighting Germany. Trotsky informed the whole world that he and his party meant "to sweep all secret treaties into the dust-bin", and by setting an example of really democratic diplomacy to increase the pressure on Western Europe to secure a brotherly union. He began by publishing confidential diplomatic papers which had fallen into his hands when the public offices were seized. The action was of small importance, except in so far as it proved the determination of the Bolsheviki to break away from the comity of nations altogether.

The next, and now the inevitable, step was to open negotiations with Germany. The Russian agents met the German at Brest-Litovsk, a railway junction on the Bug, and on the borders of the province of Grodno. From the first, and until the peace was made, two truths were obvious. One

was that the Bolshevik spokesmen believed themselves to be in the commanding position of men who had a new message to deliver to mankind of so persuasive a quality that it had only to be stated to meet with acceptance from the peoples of Western Europe. The peoples, in their opinion, were formed by the ranks, and did not include the "privileged" classes. The second truth was that they were utterly helpless in presence of the material strength of the Germans. They asked, to begin with, for a democratic peace, to start from an armistice on all the fronts. The Germans were to remain "in position, but to evacuate the islands in the Gulf of Riga".

No better instance of what may be called a contradiction in terms could well have been given. At this moment, December 5, General Dukhonin had not yet been murdered. He was still at his head-quarters, Mohilev, to the east of Grodno. The representatives of foreign powers lodged a protest with him against the application for an armistice. It was, as they justly pointed out, a violation of the agreement of September 5, 1914. Their intervention, though natural, precipitated the military outbreak in which Dukhonin lost his life. The Germans, who could easily foresee what would happen, had rejected the Bolshevik proposal at once, and offered only an armistice on the Russian frontier. Trotsky and his colleagues replied that they would refer to their military advisers, by which we may safely assume that they meant that they would make sure of the removal of Dukhonin before going further. The

Bolsheviks were, in fact, making sure everywhere. They were so thorough that they announced quite plainly that unless the Constituent Assembly, which was then about to meet, contained such a majority as they approved of, it would be dissolved. In the pressure of other matter we need only note that when the Constituent Assembly met, and did not prove satisfactory to the Bolsheviks, it was brushed aside without ceremony or difficulty. There were two realities in Russia—the desire of the poor to lay hands on the property of the rich, and the longing for peace. On them Lenin relied, and the result showed that he chose well for his immediate interest.

Regular negotiations began on December 10, when the grotesque

Krylenko was in command in Mohilev, and the Bolsheviks were fully masters. However much they may have wished to show the world a new diplomatic way, they did not despise the old device of asking for more than they well knew they would obtain. They secured what the Germans chose to give them. The terms of the armistice, as they were in reality settled by Von Kühlmann for Germany, and Count Czernin for Austria, were:—

(a) That a suspension of arms, which was to be followed "by a lasting and honourable peace", should be declared as from December 17, 1917, to January 14, 1918, to continue till either party gave a week's notice of the intention to renew the war.

(b) The armistice was to apply to the European and Asiatic frontiers of the negotiating powers.



Petrograd under Snow and the Red Flag—one of the streets barricaded and guarded by field-guns



Photograph by Bana, Petrograd

Revolutionary Days in Petrograd: insurgent troops on their way to the Duma

(c) Neither party was to move troops to any other scene of war—a promise which the Germans could well afford to make, for they had already been dispatching all the men they could afford to spare to the Western front.

(d) Organized intercourse was to be allowed for correspondence and trade.

(e) The Russians and Turks were both to withdraw from Persia.

(f) Peace negotiations were to begin at once.

The Russians had, in fact, already surrendered. The course of the negotiations for "a lasting and honourable peace" began on December 22, and were dragged on till the middle of February, 1918. During this period of two months many examples were given of what happens to people who, to quote the didactic words of Von Kühlmann, fail "to take care not to lose their footing on the firm ground

of facts". The Russian representatives were in the position of men who are striving to bargain when they have nothing with which a bargain can be made. The Germans and Austrians were not only in possession of conquered territory, but they were able to prove that Russia was in a state of disintegration, by insisting that the Ukraine, which had declared itself independent, should take part in the negotiations. And they went further. They laid it down that the parts of the former Russian Empire which were actually in their possession—the Baltic Provinces, Lithuania, and Poland—having already announced their intention to separate, could no longer be considered as forming part of Russia. They were quite ready to protest that they had no intention of annexing territory by force. A

great deal was said of "self-determination", a new term which stood for the freedom of a people to decide on its own destinies. But when the Bolshevik diplomatists called on them to evacuate the districts which were said to desire independence, and leave them really free to speak, the request was doggedly refused.

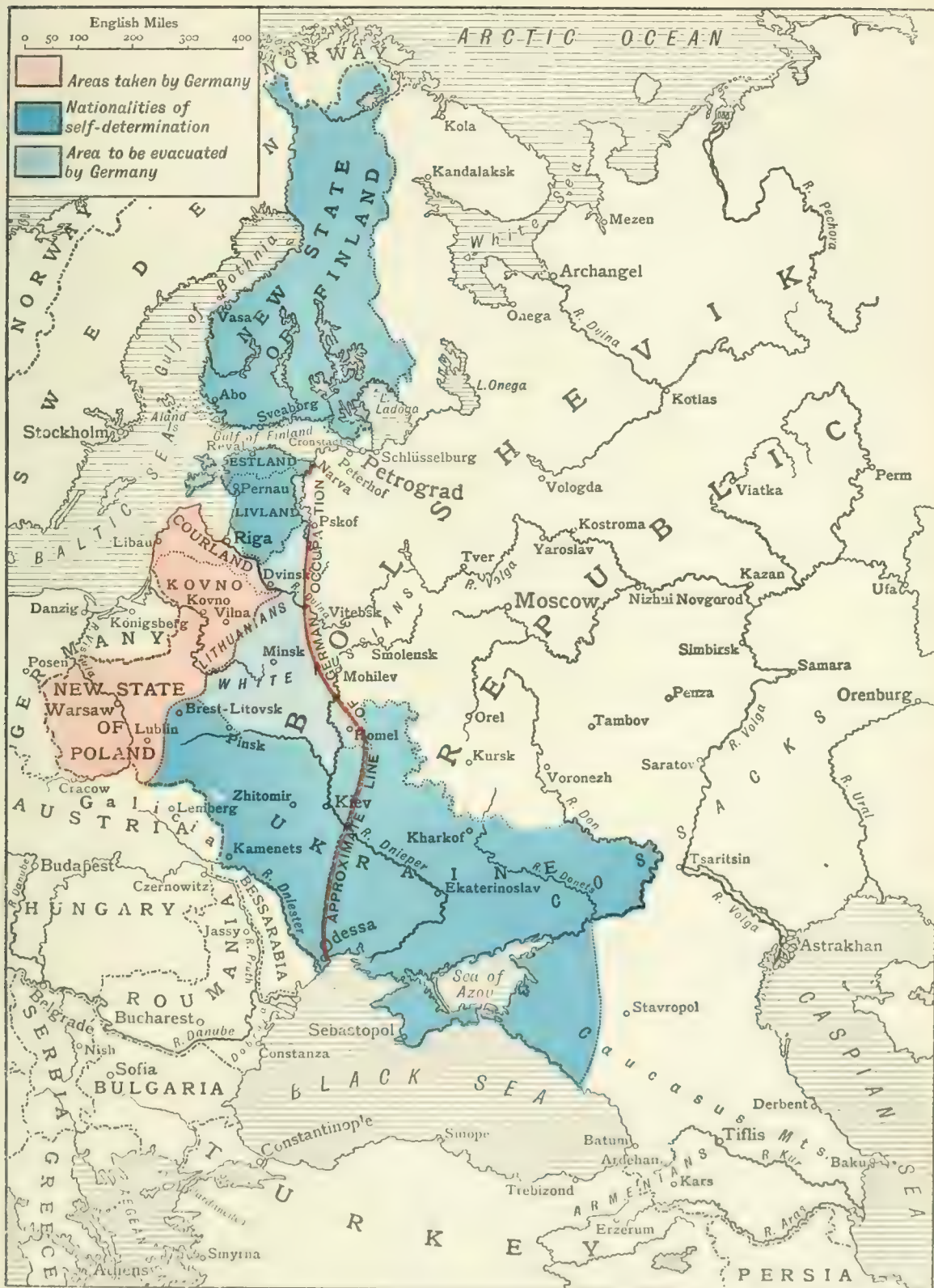
The Central Powers would not as much as promise to evacuate territory which they allowed did form part of Russia till such time as the Russian armies had been disbanded. In vain did Trotsky argue, plead, appeal to sentiment, and threaten to deluge the German lines with Bolshevik leaflets—translated, of course. It was to no purpose that he strove to gain time by a proposal to remove the scene of the negotiations to Stockholm. The moral of the story was stated with brutal candour by General Hoffmann, the representative of the German army at Brest-Litovsk. It was that the Russians had forgotten that they were the beaten side. The representatives of the Ukraine, who were not asked to make concessions of territory, and were, as a matter of fact, looking to the Central Powers to protect them against Bolshevik agitation, made a separate peace. Trotsky ended by making a declaration which must be called simply comic. He said that Russia would not make such a peace as Germany and Austria demanded, but would demobilize its armies. And so the Brest-Litovsk negotiations came to an end.

The Bolshevik leaders must, indeed, have lost their footing on the firm ground of fact if they thought that

Germany would now be content to evacuate the territory it still allowed to be Russian because the armies were demobilized. Austria, which was covered by the peace with the Ukraine, could stand out. But the Germans denounced the armistice on February 18, and at once advanced all along the line on Petrograd. They were not, and could not be, opposed. Revel fell after some show of resistance, and they were within 175 miles of Petrograd at the beginning of March.

Lenin, who cannot have failed to see what would happen, and may even have seen it with no regret, at once appealed for peace. The Germans let three days pass before they answered, and then dictated their terms. They were hard, and Lenin was provoked into talking of taking up arms against Imperial Assassins. If he meant the words seriously it was not in his power to give them effect. The German knee was on Russia's chest.

The terms of peace as they were dictated by Germany were, that Russia was to cede Courland, Lithuania, and Poland. The fate of these countries was to be decided by Germany and Austria in agreement with the population. Germany was to continue to exercise police control till "the date when the constitution of the respective countries shall guarantee their social and political order". Russia was to make peace with the Ukraine, and recall all the anarchists who were aiding the opponents of the new government of Finland. She was to evacuate Armenia, also to demobilize all her armies, including the Red



M. p. illustrating the Bret-Latovsk Treaties

Guards, and to recall her war-ships to her own ports—presumably from Finland. In the economic agreements she bound herself to grant Germany commercial privileges as under the tariff of 1904. She was also to pay an indemnity for all civil damages, and the expenses of her war prisoners. The Germans also insisted that an end must be put to Bolshevik propaganda in Germany and Austria.

With this capitulation, Russia must be understood as having fallen out of the war, in the sense that she could no longer act in a regular way as a State. But it was equally obvious that she would continue to be convulsed by hostilities. The so-called

peace was no peace. The ambiguity in which it left the status of Livonia and Esthonia was alone enough to show that the treaty was hollow. They were not simply ceded to Germany. On the face of it they were left free to decide their fate by "self-determination". Yet no guarantee was given that they would be allowed to exercise their supposed freedom. They were under German police control, and it was too clear that they would be coerced. It was not long before the fraud, hidden very thinly by the double-edged language of the treaty, was revealed; but subsequent events do not come within the scope of this chapter. D. H.

THE TREATY OF BREST-LITOVSK, MARCH 5, 1918

I. Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria, and Turkey on the one hand, and Russia on the other hand, declare that the state of war between them is at an end. They are resolved to live in peace and friendship with one another.

II. The contracting parties will abandon all agitation or propaganda against the Government or the State or military institutions of the other party. This pledge holds good, as regards Russia, also for the territories occupied by the Powers of the Quadruple Alliance.

III. The territories which lie to the west of the line settled between the contracting parties, and which belonged to Russia, will no longer be subject of the sovereignty of the Russian State. The line agreed upon is indicated on the map appended to this treaty as an essential part of it. The detailed demarcation of this line will be carried out by a German-Russian Commission. The territories in question will not have any obligations as the result of their former connection with Russia.

Russia renounces all interference in the internal affairs of these territories. Germany and Austria-Hungary intend to decide the future fate of these territories by agreement with their population.

IV. Germany is ready, as soon as general peace is concluded and the Russian demobilization completely carried out, to evacuate the territory east of the line indicated in Article III, in so far as Article VI does not modify this.

Russia will do all in her power to ensure the speedy evacuation of the East Anatolian provinces and their orderly restoration to Turkey. The districts of Ardehan, Kars, and Batum will also be evacuated without delay by the Russian troops. Russia will not interfere with the revision of the constitutional and international conditions of these districts, but leaves it to the population of these districts to carry this out in agreement with the neighbouring States, especially Turkey.

V. Russia will, without delay, carry out the complete demobilization of her army,

including the army units reformed by the present Government.

Russia will also either transfer her war-ships to Russian harbours, and leave them there till the conclusion of general peace, or will at once disarm them.

War-ships of the States remaining at war with the Powers of the Quadruple Alliance will, in so far as they are within the Russian sphere, be treated as Russian war-ships.

The blockaded area in the White Sea remains till the conclusion of general peace.

In the Baltic, and as far as Russian power reaches in the Black Sea, the removal of mines will at once be proceeded with.

Mercantile navigation is free in these waters, and will be at once resumed.

A mixed Commission will be appointed to fix further details, and especially to announce dangerous routes for mercantile shipping.

The sea routes are to be kept permanently free from floating mines.

VI. Russia pledges herself to declare immediate peace with the Ukrainian People's Republic, and to recognize the peace treaty concluded between this State and the Powers of the Quadruple Alliance. The territory of the Ukraine will be evacuated without delay by the Russian troops and the Russian Red Guards. Russia abandons all agitation or propaganda against the Government or the public institutions of the Ukrainian People's Republic.

Esthonia (Estland) and Livonia (Livland) will likewise be evacuated without delay by the Russian troops and Red Guard. The eastern frontier of Esthonia runs in the main along the River Narva. The eastern frontier

of Livonia runs in the main through the Pepuis and Pskov Lakes to the latter's south-west corner, and then through the Luban Lake in the direction of Livenhof on the Duna.

Esthonia and Livonia will be occupied by a German police force until public safety is ensured by native institutions and State order is restored.

Russia will at once set free all inhabitants of Esthonia and Livonia who have been arrested or carried away, and guarantees their safe return.

Also Finland and the Aland Islands will be promptly evacuated by the Russian troops and Red Guard, and the Finnish harbours by the Russian Fleet and naval forces. As long as the ice prevents the transfer of Russian war-ships to Russian harbours only weak crews will be left on board the war-ships.

Russia abandons all agitation or propaganda against the Government or public institutions of Finland. The fortifications on the Aland Islands are to be destroyed as soon as possible. A special treaty is to be concluded between Germany, Russia, Finland, and Sweden regarding the duration of the non-fortification of these islands, as also regarding their position in military and shipping matters. It is agreed that if Germany should desire it, other States bordering on the Baltic Sea may also take part in this treaty.

[Both contracting parties renounced compensation for war expenses (i.e. indemnities). The Russian losses of territory amounted to 1,400,000 square kilometres, with a population of 65,000,000.]

CHAPTER XIX

FIGHTING THE TURKS IN SINAI AND PALESTINE

(May, 1916-June, 1917)

The "Jugular Vein of the British Empire"—Egypt's Defence on its Eastern Boundary—Sir Archibald Murray's Plans for the Reconquest of Sinai—Building the Desert Railway—Guarding the Canal—Wonders of the Water-supply—Enemy Attacks on the Desert Column—Disaster to the Yeomanry—Deudidar's Heroic Defence—Battle of Romani—Enemy's Heavy Defeat—Conquering the Desert by Rail—Reorganizing the Expeditionary Force—Occupation of El Arish—Capture of the Magdhaba Garrison—The Fight for Rafa—Clearing the Last Turks out of Sinai—General Murray receives the K.C.M.G.—Palestine invaded—British War Cabinet's Plans—Strengthening General Murray's Force—Von Kressentein bars the Way—The First Two Battles of Gaza—Results of the Double Set-back—Sir Philip Chetwode succeeds General Dobell—General Allenby succeeds Sir Archibald Murray.

LONG before the Bolsheviks signed the shameful pact of Brest-Litovsk, the Russian military collapse had profoundly affected our military position, not only on the Western Front, but also in our far-flung campaigns against the Turks in the Near and Middle East. To see these distant theatres of war in their true perspective to the rest of the world-wide struggle, we must first trace their fortunes from the point at which we had to leave them in our last chapter on the subject. The Mesopotamian Campaign has been followed as far as Sir Stanley Maude's triumphant entry into Bagdad in March, 1917,¹ but we must retrace our steps still further before we can bring the Palestine operations into line.

Our last chapter on the Egyptian front (Chapter XVI, Vol. V), closes in the spring of 1916 with General Peyton's brilliant campaign which had driven back the Senussi, and the Turco-German intriguers supporting

them, far beyond the western borders of Egypt. On the eastern frontier, meantime, there had been no further attack by the Turks of any consequence since their humiliating defeat in February, 1915. Nevertheless, Djemal Pasha's so-called "Egyptian army" still held the Sinai Peninsula, and the "jugular vein of the British Empire", as the Kaiser once called the Suez Canal, was not yet out of danger. It was bound to remain in jeopardy until a more defensible frontier had been secured for Egypt on the other side of Sinai.

It is said that Lord Kitchener, when he visited Egypt on returning from his historic visit to Gallipoli, before deciding on the evacuation of that peninsula, and saw the defences of the Suez Canal, asked a distinguished general: "Are you defending the Canal, or is the Canal defending you?" a remark which exactly summed up the situation as it existed at that period. The truth was that both sides were biding their time. The Turkish army, as well as the British, was too deeply

¹ See pp. 41-59.

involved in the campaigns in Gallipoli and Mesopotamia to do more for the moment in the desert regions of the Suez Canal.

The complete evacuation of Gallipoli at the beginning of 1916, however, and General Townshend's capitulation at Kut towards the end of the following April, started a new and significant chapter in the history of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force. General Sir Archibald Murray—previously Chief of the Imperial General Staff at Army Head-quarters in London—who arrived in Cairo on January 9 of that year, and took over the Egyptian command at the close of General Peyton's successful operations on the western frontier, saw that the problem of defending Egypt on its eastern boundary could only be solved on the other side of the peninsula, on the frontier of Palestine, not on the banks of the Suez Canal. The position at that period was thus explained by General Murray:—

“The work on the stationary defences was backward. Difficulties of water-supply on the east bank were increased by shortage of piping; labour troubles had delayed the progress of roads and railways. Guns had still to be emplaced, and no part of the front defence line was actually occupied by troops. Nevertheless, as there were no signs of an imminent advance on the part of the enemy, the question of the stationary defences caused me no serious anxiety, though everything possible was done to hasten on their completion. The organization of the offensive defence, which time has proved to be paramount, was, however, a pressing matter hitherto untouched. Practically nothing had been done towards the organization of mobile forces. The collection of a large number of riding and

transport camels had to be undertaken at once and a plan of campaign to be devised. Moreover, time was short, for it was plain that any offensive on a large scale by the enemy must be commenced before the middle of March. For the force under my command the only possible line of advance was along the northern line from Kantara towards Katieh and El Arish, and the task was at once taken up of examining the possibilities of an offensive on this line and solving the problem of maintaining a considerable force at Katieh during the summer months.”

The result of these investigations was recorded in General Murray's memorandum of February 15, 1916, addressed to the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, in which he stated that the first step towards securing the true base for the defence of Egypt was an advance to a suitable position east of Katieh, and the construction of a railway to that place. The new Commander-in-Chief was more fortunately placed than his predecessor, in having forces at his disposal for carrying out the more vigorous policy of an offensive defensive. His first step towards driving the Turks back from Sinai—lock, stock, and barrel—was to follow Lord Kitchener's example in the Khartoum Campaign, and make an iron road. This was the standard-gauge railway, which, running eventually from Kantara to Palestine, ensured the success of the whole military strategy in our subsequent triumphs in the Holy Land.

Protected by a thin line of outposts, the new line crept steadily across the desert under the very nose of the Turks and their German masters, whose plans for attacking the Canal

had been wrecked for the time being by the fall of Erzerum (February 16)—for it must not be forgotten that Russia's brilliant operations in Armenia at this critical period of our campaign against Turkey, though failing to loosen the enemy's hold over General Townshend's gallant garrison in Kut, relieved the situation on the Egyptian frontier. It must have been gall and wormwood to Colonel von Kressenstein, the Bavarian officer who seemed to have taken the command of the Sinai operations out of Djemal Pasha's hands at this stage of the campaign, to find himself unable to stop the steady progress of this threatening line. His aeroplanes bombed it at every opportunity, and one or two serious attempts were made to put it out of action by infantry attack; but, though checked here and there, it forged ahead under the ceaseless efforts of the Egyptian Labour Corps, who, with the splendid example set them by construction gangs of Sikh pioneers, and admirably controlled by the railway companies of the Royal Engineers and officials of the Egyptian State Railways, proved the finest navvies in the world.

Thus in time the line became the backbone and the very life-blood of the new crusading force which, at long last, was destined to wrest the Holy Land from the hand of the Turks.

"Running over it", to quote from the account subsequently published by Mr. W. T. Massey, the official correspondent with the Egyptian Expeditionary Force, "were London and South-Western engines and trucks with loads infinitely heavier than

they ever hauled between Southampton Docks and Nine Elms. Without cessation night and day, week in week out, they moved on a journey out and home of 300 miles to a time-table jealously guarded by R.T.O.'s and their staffs. To the conveyance of construction materials and supplies was added the constant movement of troops and equipment; yet the line, which by all the pre-war theories of railway management at home would be held to be grievously overworked, did its job with extraordinary smoothness and efficiency."¹

Meantime no risks were being taken along the Canal itself, the eastern bank of which was packed with troops. Men from every quarter of the Motherland, and every part of the Seven Seas, stood sentinel over the narrow waterway which formed the vital artery of the whole Empire, and dug and built elaborate defences which, though never, as it happened, put to the test of battle, were nevertheless necessary safeguards at the time. Of more permanent value was the trunk road completed by the troops between Ismailia and Port Said on the western side of the Canal, making it possible for the first time to travel from Port Said to Cairo by motor car.

It was only in the region of the new railway that serious operations were now to take place. Permanent British posts were pushed out into the desert week by week as Railhead packed up its countless tents and moved a stage nearer the Palestine frontier. Steps were taken at the same time to make the Turkish posts in other parts of the peninsula as precarious as possible. Our air-craft bombed the enemy's advanced base at Hassana, nearly

¹ *The Desert Campaign* (1918).

100 miles from the Canal, where reservoirs were being built for the accumulation of a large water reserve. One heavy bomb, dropped with extraordinary accuracy, burst the reservoirs so completely that the whole water-supply was lost, months of labour being utterly undone in the space of a few moments. As a result, Hassana was abandoned by the enemy for the time being as a base of operations against the Canal.

The water-supply was one of the chief controlling factors of the situation on both sides. It was provided for the British troops by means of a purified supply from the waters of the White and Blue Niles, pumped forward to different stations from the filtering reservoirs on the eastern bank of the Canal. The adequacy of the British supply was a triumph of organization, and helped as much as the railway to clear the Turks out of the peninsula.

"On the desert route", writes Mr. Massey, "the troops were placed on an allowance of a gallon of water a day for all purposes—drinking, cooking, and washing—and wherever possible the animals drank the brackish water the country yielded. But as the desert column approached El Arish there was a belt of fifteen square miles without a drop of water, good or bad, and preparations had to be made for supplying tens of thousands of camels and horses as well as a large force of men in advance of railhead. To this end there were collected an immense number of tanks, which were filled from the trains, and convoys of camels, bearing fantasses containing water from these portable reservoirs, supplied the positions held by troops. After the second battle for Gaza there was a section of our line in front of the Turkish positions which was in an abso-

lutely waterless country, but the troops holding this section of trenches were never without an adequate supply of water. The old Nile was called in aid. Thus some of the troops in Palestine drank water which was lifted by the sun from the Atlantic, carried in clouds across Africa, condensed around mountain peaks and dropped as rain in the centre of the Dark Continent, and carried north by the Nile. And if the connoisseur declared chlorination spoiled the tea, he would at least admit that the draught was healthy. To stand on a Nile bridge and see the chocolate-coloured floodwaters surge past you made you think the waters contained all the germs of diseases to which an army is prone. The medical service eliminated all these, and gave the army a water more free from deleterious microbes than even the waters consumed by Londoners. There was a touch of genius about the water-supply organization, and the soldiers recognized it."¹

While supplying our own needs in that respect, we also did our best to deprive the enemy of every water source within reach that might encourage him to repeat his attacks against the Canal along its central and southern boundary. To this end troops were dispatched to draw off all water within a radius of some 60 miles of the Canal. In one spot alone a party of infantry emptied five million gallons in four days. By the midsummer of 1916 not a bucket had been left for the Turks in any part of that danger zone.

Foiled in his new schemes, the enemy retaliated first by minor attacks upon our outposts, and then by raids upon the railway itself, when the iron road had reached a point near Katieh upon which a serious British advance to

¹ *The Desert Campaign* (1918).

hold the whole district might be based. The first real fighting occurred on April 23, when the Turks endeavoured to forestall the British by making a sudden raid on the Katieh district, where the Gloucestershire, Worcestershire, and Warwickshire Yeomanry, pushed out ahead of the line, were

guardians of all railway, topographical, and water-survey parties. They were also told to keep an eye on the route eastwards from Bir el Abd, but not to take any serious offensive measures without further orders. They knew that, in the event of a heavy attack, it would take some days to re-



Map illustrating the Operations in Sinai and Palestine during Sir Archibald Murray's Command, January, 1916-June, 1917

established on a rather wide front. Two squadrons of Worcestershire Yeomanry were also covering a company of Lowland Engineers engaged in preparing wells at Oghratina, between Katieh and Bir el Abd, where the Turks were reported to have gathered some 500 strong.

These advance-guards of yeomanry, under the command of Brigadier-General E. A. Wiggin, were the

inforce them with infantry. General Wiggin's instructions accordingly were, in the event of such an attack, to manœuvre back upon Deuidar, which was garrisoned by a company of Royal Scots Fusiliers, or upon the railway head near El Araish, some 7 miles north-west of Katieh.

The full story has yet to be told of "the regrettable incident" which occurred on April 23, 1916. On the

previous day General Wiggin, hearing that new bodies of the enemy's troops were collecting at Mageibra Wells, some 10 miles south-east of Katieh, obtained permission from Major-General the Hon. H. A. Lawrence,¹ commanding the striking force of the expedition, to attack them that night and destroy their camp. As it happened, only a few Turks were found there, and General Wiggin, with his raiding-party of Worcestershire and Warwickshire Yeomanry, was returning with his disappointing bag of six prisoners when news arrived that the Turks had advanced in his absence in three columns, and were attacking Katieh, Oghratina, and Deuidar.

The first news from Oghratina was that the post had been attacked at 5.30 a.m., but that the enemy had been driven off. "No further information", writes General Murray in his subsequent dispatch, "was received from the officer commanding at Oghratina until 7 a.m., when he reported that he was again heavily attacked on all sides." This attack carried the post, all the garrison of which were either killed, wounded, or captured. No details of the fighting were obtainable, nor was much information forthcoming regarding the final scenes in Katieh. It was known that this post had been attacked at 9.30 a.m., and one squadron of Worcestershire Yeomanry, under Lieutenant-Colonel the Hon. Charles J. Coventry—an old Jameson raider, who had served in Gallipoli as well as in several earlier campaigns—had been dispatched to



Lieutenant-Colonel the Hon. C. J. Coventry, captured with the Survivors of the Katieh Garrison on April 23, 1916
(From a photograph by Lafayette)

its relief by General Wiggin. Unhappily, Colonel Coventry and his reinforcing squadron became involved in the unsuccessful resistance of the Katieh garrison, and, with the exception of some sixty men and one officer, who succeeded in disengaging themselves, fell into the hands of the enemy.

The redeeming feature of the day was the brilliant defence of the post at Deuidar by 100 men of the 5th Battalion, Royal Scots, under Captain Roberts—before the war regimental sergeant of a regular battalion of the same crack regiment—who received special mention in General Murray's dispatch for his splendid handling of the critical situation.

"This officer, who throughout showed conspicuous skill and ability," writes the

¹ Son of the first Lord Lawrence, and created K.C.B. in the following year.

Commander-in-Chief, "succeeded in repelling two determined attacks on the position at 6.30 a.m. and 8.30 a.m. respectively. Both attempts cost the enemy dear. At 9.30 reinforcements of two companies, 4th Royal Scottish Fusiliers, arrived under the command of Major Thompson,¹ who had been dispatched from Hill 70, seven miles away, when the first news of the attack arrived at Deidar. The various posts were strengthened for a counter-attack, delivered at 12.30 p.m. with great spirit, which forced the enemy to retire, leaving 30 prisoners in our hands and 70 dead. The Turks were pursued in their retreat by the 5th Australian Light Horse, who had only arrived at Kantara at 1 p.m., and by aeroplane, thereby suffering further loss."

With the gallant garrison of Royal Scots defending Deidar at the first onset of the enemy, it should be added,

¹ Major Thompson, who now assumed command in Deidar, was mortally wounded in the following year while gallantly leading his men to the attack in the second battle of Gaza.



Lord Quenington, killed in action, April 23, 1916.
From a photograph by Lafayette

were a party of Army Service Corps men (Territorials) under Captain A. C. A. Bruce, of the Lowland Mounted Brigade, and a handful of the Bikanir Camel Corps, all of whom shared the honours of the day.

In the meanwhile General Wiggin and Colonel Yorke (commanding the Gloucestershire Yeomanry) had done all that was possible with their small forces against the enemy's superior strength, consisting as it did of about 2500 troops, with four guns. Sir Archibald Murray observes that both officers "showed great judgment in dealing with the situation". After helping materially to prevent the enemy from developing his partial success, they fell back to await the arrival of reinforcements, General Wiggin retiring to Deidar by way of Hahishah, and Colonel Yorke on Romani. Neither was followed. Our casualties in this affair, besides the three and a half squadrons of yeomanry and details lost at Kantara and Oghratina, were 2 officers and 18 men killed, and 4 officers and 21 men wounded. The killed included Viscount Quenington, son and heir of Lord St. Aldwyn—better known as Sir Michael Hicks-Beach—and Colonel Leslie Cheape, who had an international reputation as a polo player. Lord Elcho was among the missing, and was subsequently presumed killed.

The enemy was made to pay a high price for his success. For the next few days the Royal Flying Corps played havoc with his camps, and inflicted heavy casualties upon his troops along the line of hurried retreat; and when our men reoccupied the Katich

district the piles of Turkish dead round the abandoned posts testified to the fierceness of the struggle before the isolated garrisons were overwhelmed. The effect on the general situation was infinitesimal. Our cavalry continued to patrol the Katieh district, and the railway behind them was pushed on with all speed towards Romani, its next stage on the road to the Palestine border.

It was at Romani, three months later, that the Turks challenged our advance in earnest, and fought their last important battle with the Egyptian Expeditionary Force before the British advance swept over the frontier into Palestine. With the arrival of the railway at Romani, Colonel von Kressenstein decided that the time had come to deliver the great Turko-German counter-stroke for which secret preparations had been in progress for months. He knew that, with Katieh as well as Romani lost, there was little hope either of stopping the iron road that was slowly but surely sealing Turkey's fate, or of himself ever reaching within striking distance of the Suez Canal.

That he succeeded in bringing a fully equipped and well-organized Turkish army across the desert for this purpose as far as Bir El Abd—within 50 miles of the Canal—without our knowledge was rather startling proof of the soundness of General Murray's policy of the offensive defensive, instead of waiting for the enemy to strike on the banks of the Canal itself. The discovery—made during an evening reconnaissance on July 19, by the Royal Flying Corps

—that the spear-head of this striking force had moved westwards from El Arish and established itself on the line Bir El Abd-Bir Jameil-Bir Baynd, completely changed the military situation.

For months there had been little of importance to record except the steady progress of the railway. The only military operations had been reconnaissances by cavalry and the Bikanir Camel Corps, and minor affairs of outposts, apart from the effective work of our airmen, who were kept busily engaged in June in checking the greatly increased activity of hostile air-craft—an increase doubtless intended to cover, as far as possible, the preparations for Von Kressenstein's forthcoming advance. On June 13, for example, a large Turkish aerodrome, consisting of ten large hangars, was located close to the enemy's base at El Arish, and an air-raid was immediately planned to put it out of action.

Eleven British machines set out on this expedition on the morning of the 18th. The first machine to arrive descended at once to a height of 100 feet and attacked, blowing to pieces an aeroplane on the ground, together with its pilot and observer, who were in their places just about to fly, as well as several mechanics alongside. Another machine found on the ground was also destroyed by bombs. "Heavy fire from rifles and anti-aircraft guns", writes the Commander-in-Chief, "was now opened on the attackers, but the British pilots carried out their orders most gallantly." Altogether, six out of the ten hangars were hit, and two, if

not three, were burnt to the ground. A party of soldiers on the aerodrome were also successfully bombed, and at the close one of the observing machines attacked the hangars with his machine-gun at a height of 1200 feet. We lost three machines in this daring action. Of these, one was forced to descend 2 miles north of the aerodrome, though the pilot succeeded in setting the machine on fire before being himself captured. The second fell into the sea, where the pilot was rescued by a boat. The third was compelled to land some 8 miles west of El Arish, and while its pilot was endeavouring to carry out repairs before the enemy could reach him, he was seen by one of our escorting machines, which landed at considerable risk, took him up, and flew back to Kantara, a distance of 90 miles, thus carrying two passengers in addition to the pilot. "It was an extremely gallant feat", in the words of the Commander-in-Chief's report at the time, General Murray adding that he could not speak too highly of the manner in which this attack had been carried out.

The strength of the Turko-German force which, about a month later, was suddenly discovered more than half-way across the desert from El Arish, and within some 15 miles of General Murray's main position, was estimated at between 8000 and 9000 strong. Unable to decide whether the enemy's intention was to repeat the Katieh raid of April 23 on a larger scale, or to make a more elaborate advance, General Murray prepared to meet either emergency by

at once reinforcing his troops in this area. Von Kressenstein's intentions remained in doubt for another ten days, both sides meanwhile increasing in fighting strength and preparing for battle. From prisoners captured by our cavalry it transpired that the enemy force consisted of the Turkish Third Division, with eight machine-gun companies, officered and partly manned by Germans, together with mountain artillery and some batteries of 4-inch and 6-inch howitzers and anti-aircraft guns, manned chiefly by Austrians, with a body of Arab cavalry. In addition to the German personnel of the machine-gun units and heavy artillery, wireless sections, field hospital, and supply section had been organized in Germany as a special formation for operations with the Turkish forces. The whole army, which from first to last numbered some 18,000 men, including some 15,000 rifles, was in fine physical condition and admirably equipped.

It had been asserted, by those who scoffed at the idea of a serious attack on Egypt, that the Turks could never bring heavier weapons across the desert than the Krupp mountain guns, but the battle of Romani showed that under their German leaders they could not only bring up howitzers, but use them with telling effect. Their ingenious plan for making a sufficiently stable track for the purpose is described by Mr. Massey in his *Desert Campaigns*, as follows:—

"Practically all the way from El Arish to beyond Kantara they constructed an artillery road by cutting two trenches, each a foot deep and about eighteen inches wide,

which they filled in with the brushwood and tough scrub found all over this part of the desert, and covered the whole with a layer of sand. When the sand was exceptionally soft, wide planks were used in place of brushwood, a battalion of labourers being employed in carrying the timber from the rear of the batteries to the front of them, till the soil became firmer and the scrub track could be resumed."

Fortunately, though the enemy's advance so far had been somewhat of a surprise, we had been taking no risks, and the Royal Flying Corps' report of July 19, as Mr. Massey adds, "found us in an advanced state of preparedness". Sure of his own defences, General Murray issued instructions that if the Turks disclosed any intention of attacking, nothing was to be done to hinder them by a premature attack on our part. Day after day elapsed, however, without revealing the enemy's intentions. Using Bir El Abd as his advance base, he confined himself to closing up his troops on his new front, and strengthening his position. By the 24th he had established a force, estimated at 5000 men, in a series of entrenchments extending from Hod En Negiliat through Oghratina to Hod El Masia, with supporting bodies of about 1000 each at Bir Abu Afein and Bir El Abd behind his right flank. On his left, Mageibra was entrenched with a series of strong redoubts, and held by some 3000 troops, with small connecting-posts northward to Hod El Masia. Our own front, along the Mahemdia-Romani position, consisted of a series of strong posts extending southwards from the sea to

a point on the east of the Katib Gannit Hill, thence curving backwards round the southern slope of that hill north-westwards towards Etmalier. Major-General Lawrence was in local command of the operations.

Since it was now evident that the Turks, instead of making an immediate raid upon the Katieh district, must be planning either a serious assault upon the Canal defences, or preparing to establish himself in order to block our further advance, as well as to prevent us from denying to him the whole of the Katieh area—the only district within which he could collect and maintain any considerable force within striking distance of the Suez Canal—General Murray decided that the sole course of action left to him was to attack the enemy where he stood, and inflict a decisive defeat as soon as possible. Plans were accordingly formulated with the object of advancing across the intervening 15 miles of desert towards the middle of August, the date of full moon, and striking with all the British force available.

On the night of July 27–28, however, the enemy, as if himself meaning to attack, threw out an advance line all along his front, but instead of advancing farther spent the next few days in strengthening his new positions. At this stage our offensive was started by the Royal Air Force, which constantly punished not only the entrenched troops, but their re-inforcements all the way along the northern road, with bomb attacks. British monitors—one of them commanded by Lieutenant-Commander

A. O. St. John, and the other by Commander E. Robinson, who had won the V.C. in the Gallipoli campaign—lying off Mahemdia rendered most valuable assistance at the same time by shelling the enemy's camps and works. Our mounted troops also kept in constant touch with the Turks, harassing them in every possible way.

Not until August 3 was it certain whether the real offensive would come from our side or the enemy's. On that night of August 3, however, the Turks swept all doubts aside by making a general move forward, occupying the Katieh oasis with flanks flung forward to the north-west and south-west, their position taking the shape of an irregular crescent.

It would take more space than we can spare to follow the whole course of the subsequent operations, which, from beginning to end, lasted some nine days; but from the very beginning the issue was never in serious doubt. The frontal attack utterly failed, the Turks finding themselves up against the division of Scottish Territorials under the command of Major-General W. E. B. Smith. These troops—"my own brave fellow-countrymen of the Lowland Division of Scotland", as Sir Ian Hamilton described them in his farewell message on leaving Gallipoli—though weakened by the heavy losses which they had sustained in that campaign, were as dauntless as ever, and stood throughout as firm as a rock. Some Welsh Infantry and the Herefordshire Battalions also distinguished themselves in the repulse of the enemy's repeated attacks upon the main British position.

Henceforth Von Kressenstein's hopes were centred in the outflanking movement from the south, but here he fell into another nest of hornets in the shape of Australian Light Horse and New Zealand Mounted Rifles, who also had certain Gallipoli accounts to settle with the Turks, and made the most of every opportunity when the hour struck for Sir Archibald Murray's great counter-attack.

By sunset on the following day the second Turco-German attack on Egypt, despite better leadership and more scientific methods than the first, had been irretrievably smashed. It had not all been plain sailing, however. There had been unlooked-for delay in the moving up of our infantry reinforcements to Pelusium station, whence the counter-attack was launched against the enemy's southern flank on Mount Royston, a high sand-dune 2 miles away, named after Brigadier-General J. R. Royston, commanding the 2nd Australian Light Horse Brigade. The result was that the whole brunt of the heavy fighting in this area on the morning of the 4th fell upon the cavalry, who had already suffered considerable losses; but, as always, they responded nobly to the needs of the situation.

With the arrival in the afternoon of two battalions of the Manchester Territorials—units of the stout East Lancashire Division which, like the majority of the troops engaged in these operations, had served with high honour in Gallipoli—the British counter-attack was pressed home, and by 6.30 p.m. Mount Royston, with

about 500 prisoners, some machine-guns, and a battery of mountain artillery, were in our hands. Wellington Ridge, another sand-dune held by the Turks—named after the Wellington (New Zealand) Mounted Rifles—was also partly cleared before nightfall by the Lowlanders, who not only completed its capture at dawn the next day, assisted by the Mounted Anzacs, but also took about 1500 prisoners. Later in the same day they also captured Abu Hamra, thus clearing the way for our further advance towards Katieh.

Here the enemy's rear-guards were so firmly established, and so well protected on both flanks, that the attempts which were made immediately to eject them by dismounted action failed, and cavalry efforts to cut off their retreat were frustrated. Darkness on the 5th thus found our troops and the enemy's facing each other roughly on parallel lines. When dawn broke on the following day, however, it was seen that the Turks, following their usual practice in defeat, had slipped away during the night. Though soundly beaten, they were still full of fight and admirably led, and, supported by their howitzers, as well as by reinforcements of fresh infantry divisions, made good their escape with the bulk of their forces and guns, though with Anzac horsemen, British Yeomanry, and the Camel Corps—under Lieutenant-Colonel C. L. Smith, V.C.—as well as the "Cavalry of the air", in hot pursuit.

All the mounted troops were now under the command of Major-General H. G. Chauvel, one of Australia's

most distinguished soldiers, who received the K.C.M.G. during the following year for his services during the war. "Throughout the whole month which elapsed between the enemy's first approach and his final disappearance", records Sir Archibald Murray, "Major-General Chauvel



Major-General Sir H. G. Chauvel, commanding the Cavalry in the Sinai Operations
(From a photograph by Swaine)

proved himself a resolute and resourceful cavalry leader."

Though we had been deprived of the full fruits of victory, the results of the last battle had been sufficiently striking. Some 4000 prisoners, including 50 officers with a sprinkling of Germans, were captured, and from the number of dead actually buried it was estimated that the total number of enemy casualties amounted to about 9000. We had also captured one

Krupp 75-mm. mountain battery of four guns, complete with all accessories and 400 rounds of ammunition; nine German machine-guns and mountings, with specially constructed saddles for camel transport; 2500 rifles, 1000 arms and ammunition, 600 horses, mules, and camels; two field-hospitals with most of their equipment, and a large amount of miscellaneous booty. Apart from the losses thus inflicted, the Romani victory had given the enemy, in the words of Sir Archibald Murray, "a new and unexpected proof of our extended radius of action, and induced him, in the course of the next few days, to evacuate his camp at Bir El Mazar, and withdraw his troops to camps near El Arish".

Here he remained for the most part until the end of 1916, while the iron road, creeping ever nearer to the Palestine border, gradually decreased the distance between them. Progress on the railway had, of course, been stopped during the battle of Romani, but immediately the Turks retired the work was resumed. Track-laying proceeded at the rate of a kilometre a day. No one moving along the desert railway after its completion could form the least idea of the enormous magnitude of the task involved in its construction. The whole camping-ground of the workmen and troops was swept by the sands so completely that no vestige remained of all the vast preliminaries save the railway line itself. While the work was in progress, however, there was no lack of tangible evidence of our determination to conquer the desert as well as the Turk.

"Since January", wrote Sir Archibald Murray, in dealing with the situation at the end of the year, "the force had gradually pushed right across the Sinai desert, fighting when necessary, organizing and constructing incessantly in the heavy sand and hot sun. The pressure on the enemy in other theatres, and our success at Romani, were undoubtedly contributing factors to this advance, but the main factor—without which all liberty of action and any tactical victory would have been nugatory—was work, intense and unrelenting. To regain this peninsula, the true frontier of Egypt, hundreds of miles of road and railway had been built, hundreds of miles of water piping had been laid, filters capable of supplying 1,500,000 gallons of water a day, and reservoirs had been installed, and tons of stone transported from distant quarries. Kantara had been transformed from a small canal village into an important railway and water terminus, with wharves and cranes and a railway ferry; and the desert, till then almost destitute of human habitation, showed the successive marks of our advance in the shape of strong positions firmly entrenched, and protected by hundreds of miles of barbed wire, of standing camps where troops could shelter in comfortable huts, of tanks and reservoirs, of railway stations and sidings, of aerodromes and of signal stations and wireless installations, by all of which the desert was subdued and made habitable, and adequate lines of communication established between the advancing troops and their ever-receding base."

Before the end of 1916 the organization of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force had been completely changed. In order to be in closer touch with the civil authorities, Sir Archibald Murray had moved his head-quarters from Ismalia to Cairo, the head-quarters of the "Eastern Force", as the Sinai section of the Egyptian Command was called, coming into

existence at the same time at Ismalia, under the command of Lieutenant-General Sir Charles Dobell, who had received his knighthood earlier in the year for his brilliant leadership in the Cameroons Campaign, described at the time by Mr. Asquith as "one of the most satisfactory and complete expeditions so far in the history of the war".

On December 7 the striking force in the peninsula, known as the Desert Column, was placed under the command of Lieutenant-General Sir Philip Chetwode, fresh from the Western Front, where he had distinguished himself as a cavalry leader from the earliest days of the war. General Lawrence, meantime, was rewarded with the C.B. in November (the K.C.B. following two months later), and had returned to Europe.

The railway at this stage had reached a point east of Mazar, and hopes were high among our troops that Christmas would bring them within sight of the promised land of Palestine. Though the Turks still barred the way at Masaid and El Arish, Sir Archibald Murray's only fear was that they would withdraw across the frontier before he would be ready to strike. Our mounted troops, patrolling in advance of Rail-head, were accordingly ordered to remain as unostentatious as possible, final preparations for attack being meanwhile pushed on with most strenuous determination. The water-supply was still the chief stumbling-block. There was no water available in the whole area between our position and those of the Turks, and elaborate

preparations had to be made before it was safe to launch an attack. "Had rain only fallen," writes the Commander-in-Chief—at a time, by the way, when Sir Douglas Haig on the Western Front was lamenting the deluge on the battle-fields of the Somme—"an earlier move could have been made, but, as it was, the water-supply for the striking force was not adequately secured until December 20."

But the Turks had no further intention of testing the strength of the Desert Column in Sinai itself, the unwelcome news being brought to British headquarters on December 20 by the Royal Flying Corps that the enemy was in full retreat in the direction of the Palestine border. The Anzac mounted division and the Imperial Canadian Corps were at once sent to take possession of Masaid and El Arish, both places being occupied on the following day.

El Arish—a town of considerable size, about a mile from the sea, and the most important strategic point in eastern Egypt, being the inevitable jumping-off place either for an invasion of Turkey from Egypt or vice versa—was at once turned to the best account. In forty-eight hours the roadstead was cleared of mines, and supply ships from Port Said began unloading stores in time for Christmas Day. The British naval squadron, under Vice-Admiral Sir Rosslyn Wemyss—destined to succeed Admiral Jellicoe as First Sea Lord in the following year—had co-operated in every possible way throughout the operations. Three months before, the monitors, at 10,000 yards, had destroyed the

Turkish fort at El Arish, which had been reduced by Napoleon's guns at 100 yards; and so accurate was the monitors' shooting that, though the fort was surrounded by houses and a mosque, not another building was touched.

With the advance of our troops on

guard of some 2000 men had been left at Magdhaba, General Chauvel was dispatched with the mounted Anzacs and Imperial Camel Corps—composed of men drawn from the British yeomanry and Colonial regiments—to round them up.



British Official Photographer

After the Capture of Magdhaba: sorting out the prisoners at El Arish

El Arish the Turks retired, not along the coast, but south-east, as Sir Archibald Murray anticipated, up the water-course known as the Wadi-el-Arish, towards their fortified stronghold at Magdhaba, some 23 miles away, thence retreating with their main force towards El Auja on the frontier, where the strategic railway from Beersheba had its terminus. The air-scouts having reported that a rear

A wonderful night march of 25 miles found the Turks, though amazed at the suddenness of the British advance, firmly established in a position of great defensive strength. At a mile's distance, we are told, Magdhaba looked absolutely flat, whereas it was a convex position with five redoubts so cunningly placed that each supported the other, and swept the line of approach. Though the place was

practically surrounded between 9 and 1.30 p.m., it became increasingly difficult to make much headway through this deadly girdle of fire. The Royal Horse Artillery—Inverness, Ayrshire, and Leicester batteries, with the Somerset battery acting as ammunition column—had been heavily handicapped by the mirage as well as by the difficulty of getting forward observation, the ground round the enemy's position being entirely devoid of cover.

"As a matter of fact," writes Mr. Massey, "only one of the redoubts could be located by our gunners, and this they smashed up so thoroughly that white flags were shown early in the day; but as a heavy fire continued from other positions, the surrender of a portion of the enemy could not be accepted. The attack progressed well on all sides, but it was slow, owing to the ground favouring the defence, and about noon the whole advance, except in the wadi, seemed to be held up. The enemy appeared determined to hold on, and it was a question whether we could last all day, because the horses had not been watered since the previous evening, and no water was available nearer than many miles to the rear. We continued to press by degrees, and at a given signal, at three o'clock, just as the troops were approaching the trenches, the Turkish resistance collapsed."

Besides many dead, the Turks lost 1282 prisoners in this fine action, including their Commander, Klaat Bey, together with another battery of Krupp mountain guns, over 1000 rifles, and other booty. Our own casualties were 12 officers and 134 other ranks killed or wounded.

Leaving their wounded to receive every attention in the well-equipped hospital which was found established

at Magdhaba, the Flying Column returned in triumph the same night, and satisfied their heart's desire of spending Christmas Day at El Arish, over which the Egyptian flag was now flying again after more than two years of Turkish occupation. Napoleon himself had occupied El Arish about 120



Egypt and Palestine, and their Communications with Constantinople and the Balkans

years before—like General Murray, on his way to Gaza, with dreams, never to be realized, of marching thence upon Constantinople by way of Damascus and Aleppo; "and perhaps," as he told Bourrienne, his secretary during his Syrian campaign, "return to France by Adrianople and Vienna, after having annihilated the Hapsburg dynasty". General Murray's own designs were drawn on a far more modest scale, but his iron

road into Palestine was destined, in due course, to play a larger part in defeating the Hapsburgs in the twentieth century—as well as the Hohenzollerns—than Napoleon ever realized through his desperate plans in Egypt and Syria.

There was still some general rounding up to be done before Sinai itself was finally cleared of its invaders. Though part of his force had swept to El Auja, the enemy still retained a foothold at Rafa, with a strong entrenched position at Magruntein, occupied by a garrison of about the same strength as that which had been left at Magdhaba. As soon as this garrison came within striking distance of our mounted troops, General Murray determined, if possible, to repeat his Magdhaba coup. Another flying column was accordingly dispatched on the evening of January 8–9, 1917, under the command of Sir Philip Chetwode, with the object of surrounding the garrison and capturing it. The striking force consisted of yeomanry, Australian and New Zealand mounted troops, and the Imperial Camel Corps, with one battery of artillery attached, and a few light armoured cars.

So swiftly and efficiently was the night march of some 30 miles carried out that the Turks at Magruntein were almost entirely surrounded before they knew what was happening; but they were well protected by three series of strong defence-works connected by entrenchments, the whole position being dominated by a central keep or redoubt, some 2000 yards south-west of Rafa. Moreover, the ground across which the attack had to be delivered was entirely open and

devoid of cover. In the immediate neighbourhood of the defence-works it was described by General Murray as “almost a glacié”. The Turks were buoyed up by the knowledge that reinforcements had been promised them, and the hope that these would arrive in time. For full ten hours they put up a stout defence, but there was no denying the dash and gallantry of the attacking force, and in the end the entire garrison, with its commander, was accounted for.

Rafa itself had been occupied before 10 a.m., after the New Zealanders had galloped the police barracks and machine-gun posts, capturing a number of Germans and 165 Turkish officers and men. This dashing exploit had enabled the New Zealanders to get behind the enemy's main position at Magruntein, and played no small part in ensuring the day's success. There had been a few critical moments while the main attack under Major-General Chauvel was being delivered on the central redoubt, news coming in at the time both from the Flying Corps and our mounted patrols that the enemy's relieving force, some 2000 strong, was on the road from Shellal. At 4.30 p.m. they were within 3 miles of the position we were attacking, while other enemy troops were also reported from another direction.

“General Chetwode”, writes Mr. Massey, “was in the position of having used up all his reserves in an attack which was not completed, and of having a substantial force rapidly advancing against his rear. He acted promptly. The necessity for a final big effort was at once signalled, but actually before the orders could reach our troops the day was ours. The New Zealanders were

the first to succeed, but so rapidly were the trenches taken in other places that the different brigades do not know which was in the trenches first. The New Zealanders made a tremendous rush on the strongest part of the northern position, and, just as the sun was going down, they won it, and quickly pushed right and left into the subsidiary trenches. While the New Zealanders were taking surrenders, the Light Horse dashed forward with a cheer and completely smothered the defence in the south-eastern works, and almost simultaneously the Imperial Camel Corps gained the south-western line by a very gallant and well-timed assault. The yeomanry did not actually get into the western works, but kept the Turks heavily engaged, and by dark the whole garrison had surrendered."

The reinforcements were not only too late, but the main body, advancing from Shellal, was driven off by a solitary detachment of the Australian Light Horse, after receiving a sound drubbing from bombs and machine-gun fire from our air-craft. Altogether more than 1600 unwounded prisoners were taken in this Rafa victory, as well as a considerable amount of booty, including mountain guns and machine-guns. Our own losses amounted to 71 killed, 415 wounded, and 1 missing. In view of the dangerous proximity of large enemy forces, General Chetwode marched back the same night with all his prisoners, leaving one regiment and a light car battery to clear the battlefield. These last withdrew unmolested on the following day, and the Turks made no further attempt to reoccupy the frontier at Rafa.

The conquest of Sinai was thus completed, the peninsula now being free from all formed bodies of Turkish

troops, the previous destruction of his rear-guard at Magdhaba having compelled the enemy to withdraw also from his posts in Central Sinai—at Maghara, Hassana, and Nekhl—to which he had clung to the last moment as possible bases for future operations against the Canal. For this thorough clearance of a province which the enemy had partially held for three years General Murray expressed his indebtedness to Sir Charles Dobell and his staff.

"To them", he writes, "are mainly due the excellent organization and dispositions which ensured success without delay, and, above all, the perfection of arrangements for maintaining the troops in a waterless district far ahead of the railway, without which the dash and endurance of our troops would have been of no avail. The foresight, rapid decision, and excellent arrangements of General Sir P. Chetwode and the staff of the Desert Column, the skilful leadership of General Chauvel, the cheerful endurance by the troops concerned of the fatigue and hardships entailed by the Magdhaba operations, and their gallantry and dash at Magruntein, are also worthy of the highest praise. During the actions the work of the Royal Flying Corps, in co-operation with the mounted troops, was admirable. Not only were the enemy harassed with bombs and machine-gun fire throughout, but the air-craft reconnaissance was as reliable as it was untiring."

General Murray, who was rewarded with the K.C.M.G., also received the congratulations of the British War Cabinet on the brilliant result of his operations, "which promised", it was added significantly, "to give you further successes in the future". If, as was generally believed, the War Cabinet now expected Sir Archibald

Murray to march into Palestine and capture Jerusalem, he was poorly backed in the shape of reinforcements for such a formidable task; but it is probable that this general belief was deliberately fostered by the War Cabinet in order to contain as many Turkish forces as possible in Syria for larger Allied purposes elsewhere. It is

Dallas, and a number of batteries of light armoured cars. In addition to the Desert Column, General Dobell also had at his disposal, besides Major-General W. E. B. Smith's war-worn division of Lowlanders, and the Imperial Camel Corps, the 54th Division, under Major-General S. W. Hare, together with armoured cars and bat-



Prisoners of War: interrogating captured Turks.

true that before the first battle of Gaza took place, in the following March, General Murray's force had been considerably strengthened. General Chetwode's Desert Column now included two cavalry divisions—the Imperial Mounted Division, under Major-General H. W. Hodgson, chiefly composed of Yeomanry, joining General Chauvel's mounted Anzacs—as well as the 53rd Infantry Division, under Major-General A. G.

teries of the Royal Horse Artillery. The Lowlanders, it may be added, had done probably the hardest part of the work during the advance, having marched every inch of the long way from the Canal. The 53rd and 54th Divisions, on the other hand, had been in no serious fighting since they embarked from Suvla Bay upon the evacuation of Gallipoli, more than twelve months before.

It has been said that when the

Turks lost Sinai, Djemal Pasha, with increased concern for the safety of his Syrian army, was ready to abandon Gaza to its fate without a struggle, and concentrate on Jerusalem and its defences, but that Von Kressenstein insisted on making a stand at Gaza, which, resolutely held, he knew could be made practically impregnable against the forces which General Murray had at his disposal. Immediately after the Rafa action, Von Kressenstein accordingly covered his lines of communication from the north by preparing a strong defensive position at Weli Sheikh Nuran, concentrating his forces for this purpose on the other side of the Wadi Ghuzze, near El Shellal. While these movements were in progress, Sir Archibald Murray's Eastern Force was chiefly engaged in preparing for the further advance along the coast, a successful minor operation being meantime carried out, during February, in the heart of Sinai, where the enemy, anxious to regain something of his prestige in the eyes of the Bedouins, had re-established small posts at Hassana and Nekhl. A clean sweep was made of both posts—Hassana by a flying column from El Arish, which surrounded and captured the garrison, and Nekhl by two columns from Serapeum and Suez—another wholesome proof being thus furnished to the enemy of our power, in General Murray's words, "of striking over considerable stretches of waterless desert".

While the Eastern Force was concentrating for the new advance at El Arish, the railway station was com-

pleted there, the cavalry meantime keeping the country up to and beyond Rafa continually under observation. The rapidity of the railway's progress was the outstanding feature of the operations at this period. This presently induced the enemy to withdraw some 6 miles farther along the old caravan route towards Gaza, withdrawing his garrison to Khan Yunus—or, in other words, John's Tavern—which our cavalry entered unopposed on February 28.

By this time Sir Philip Chetwode's head-quarters with the Desert Column had been established at Sheikh Zuweiyid, about mid-way between El Arish and Khan Yunus, and preparations were on the point of completion for an attack in force upon the enemy's strong defensive position near Wela Sheikh Nuran. On March 5, however, our ever-vigilant air scouts discovered that the Turks were evacuating that position also. Efforts were made to overtake them before it was too late, but, owing to the long distance between them and Railhead, they kept out of reach save from the long arm of our airmen, who bombed their lines of communication wherever possible. They did not stop even to hold the Wadi Ghuzze—the water-course, usually dry, which with its steep banks formed the natural frontier of Egypt—but were distributed by Von Kressenstein between Gaza and Tel el Sheira, on the Turkish Central Palestine Railway, with a small garrison holding Beersheba.

General Murray's dispatches suggest that he began his campaign across the frontier without any de-

finite objective in view. There is no evidence that the War Cabinet had yet assigned him a particular goal to reach, his task, apparently, being to push into southern Palestine and threaten further invasion, with a view, to quote from the War Cabinet's "Report for the year 1917", "to containing as many Turks as possible on this front, and thus assisting the proposed operations [on the Armenian and Persian Fronts] in which our forces in Mesopotamia were co-operating". His army was inadequate for anything in the nature of a serious advance on Jerusalem, one of the strongest natural positions in the world. The new situation, therefore, was complicated, as General Murray pointed out, not only by complete uncertainty as to the line on which the enemy would ultimately elect to stand, but also by the necessity "of deciding on the method and direction of my advance in Palestine".

He decided against an attempt on Beersheba, "since by doing so I should be drawing my line of communications parallel to the enemy's front, and there was no technical advantage to be gained by linking up the military railway with the Central Palestine Railway, either at Beersheba or Tel el Sheira". Holding that the true line of advance still lay along the coast, where there was a better supply of water, and where his line of communications could be more easily protected, he decided to continue his methodical progress in that direction, and, as a preliminary, to seize the line of the Wadi Ghuzze.

As soon as the Desert Column

could be supplied from Rafa station, and the other two infantry divisions could be maintained in support of it between Rafa and the Wadi Ghuzze, General Murray set up his advance battalion head-quarters at El Arish, and, all the preliminaries of battle having been carried out by General Dobell, the Desert Column, with the Imperial Camel Corps attached, advanced on Gaza from Deir el Belah, some 3 miles from the Wadi Ghuzze, in the early hours of March 26. The plan was for the 53rd Infantry Division to deliver a frontal attack on the town, while the cavalry pushed out to the east and north to block the enemy's lines of retreat. Thus the enemy was given the alternative to stand his ground or fight his way out. He chose to stand, but with a little more luck on our side he would have been beaten as soundly as at Rafa and Magdhaba, where similar risks had been run.

This time, however, the fates ruled otherwise; though in summing up the results of this first battle of Gaza it is only fair to remember that General Murray regarded the capture of the town itself as the last of the three objects which he had in view, the first two of which were fully attained. These objects were, in his own words: "Firstly, to seize the line of the Wadi Ghuzze to cover the advance of the railway; secondly, at all costs to prevent the enemy from retiring without a fight; thirdly, if possible, to capture Gaza by a *coup de main* and to cut off its garrison".

Strangely enough, the Wadi Ghuzze, which might have proved a formidable

able obstacle, was abandoned by the enemy, as already mentioned, without a struggle. The Australian and New Zealand mounted division, leaving their bivouacs at 2.30 a.m., pushed across the wadi as far as Beit Durdis, 5 miles east of Gaza, sending out detachments to the west, east, and north. One of these detachments had the fortune to capture the commander of the 53rd Turkish Division as he was quietly driving into Gaza in his carriage. The horse, taking fright at the sudden swoop of the troop of Anzacs, had overturned the carriage, throwing the occupants ignominiously at the feet of their hilarious captors. They also captured the Turkish commander's escort of thirty men, as well as his discomfited staff. Later in the morning the same force destroyed, with machine-gun fire, the head of an enemy column as it debouched from Gaza in a north-easterly direction. Unfortunately, the cavalry movements, though they succeeded eventually in completely surrounding the Turkish garrison in Gaza, had been seriously delayed by a very dense fog, which, creeping up just before dawn, did not entirely clear until 8 a.m. "This unavoidable delay", writes General Murray, "had a serious effect upon the subsequent operations", especially at the close of the day's fighting, when two more hours of daylight might have turned the scales in our favour.

The Anzacs, to return to the opening phase of the battle, had been closely followed by the Imperial Mounted Division, which headed for El Mendur, where, with the Imperial Camel Corps, which crossed the wadi

a little farther south, it assisted in the task of keeping an eye on the Turks in the direction of Hereira and Huj, and helped to defeat the enemy's attempts to relieve Gaza from that direction.

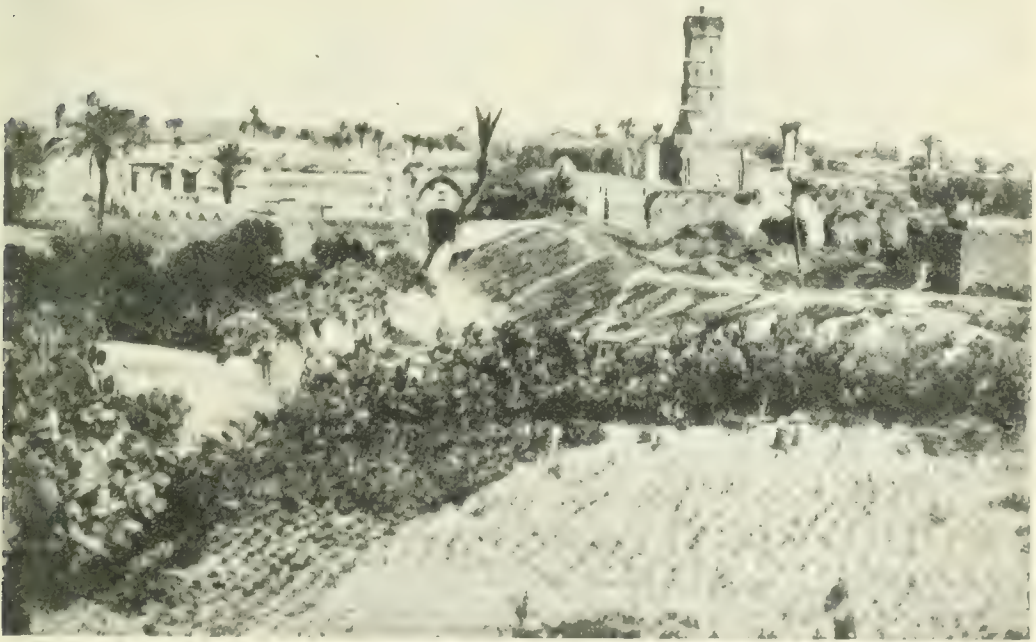
Meanwhile the 53rd Infantry Division crossed the wadi some 3 miles from the coast—where its left flank was covered by the Gloucestershire Hussars, with a battalion and a section of 60-pounders—and moved forward to assigned positions for the frontal attack, one brigade of the 54th Division joining the right of the 53rd during the morning at Mansura. The rest of the 54th Division took up a defensive position on the Sheikh Abbas ridge, south-east of Gaza, and remained there throughout the day without coming into action.

In the final advance of the attacking infantry, which began just after 1 p.m. over open ground with scarcely a vestige of cover, all the troops, as General Murray justly observes, behaved magnificently, though coming under a heavy shrapnel fire during the approach march, as well as during the deployment and attack, when the Turks offered a stout resistance both with rifle and machine-gun fire. One by one the outer defences of the enemy were stormed and held, and by 4.30 p.m. the vital position, known as the Ali Muntar Hill, on the southern outskirts of the town, was in our hands, the whole of the Australian and New Zealand Mounted Division having in the meantime been thrown against the north and north-east of the town to assist the infantry.

When darkness fell the situation was as follows: Gaza was enveloped,

and the enemy, in addition to heavy casualties in killed and wounded, had lost 700 prisoners. The 53rd Division were still holding the Ali Muntar Hill—the traditional spot to which the gates of Gaza were carried by Samson—but the right flank was very much in the air, only a thin line of

under Brigadier-General G. de L. Ryrie, particularly distinguishing itself in this phase of the operations—while the Imperial Mounted Division and the Imperial Camel Corps, on a very wide front, were endeavouring to hold off the enemy's reinforcements. One Turkish relief column, pressing its



Gaza and its Surroundings

cavalry holding up the enemy's relief columns which were approaching and increasing in strength all the time, both from the north and the east. The Australian and New Zealand Mounted Division, which had pushed home its attack from the north and north-east with the greatest gallantry, was now widely extended among the cactus hedges round Gaza, and engaged in stubborn street fighting—the Australian Light Horse,

advance with the utmost fierceness, succeeded in dislodging our troops from a permanent position on the east of Gaza, but General Chauvel at once sent back the 3rd Australian Light Horse to restore the situation, and these troops, under the skilful leadership of Brigadier-General J. R. Royston, with the support of our horse artillery and motor batteries, were able to check the enemy's advance from this direction. The water pro-

blem, however, was becoming more and more serious as the day advanced:

"The majority of the mounted troops", writes General Murray, "had been unable to water their horses during the day, and it appeared that, unless Gaza was captured during the day, they would have to withdraw west of the Wadi Ghuzze in order to water their animals. Strong columns of the enemy, with guns, were moving to the relief of Gaza from the north, north-east, and south-east. It was at this moment that the loss of two hours' daylight made itself particularly felt, since, had two more hours' daylight now been available, there is no doubt that the infantry would have been able to consolidate the positions they had won, and for arrangements to have been made by which the 54th Division could have effected junction with the 53rd. It is perhaps possible that, if General Dobell had at this stage pushed forward his reserve—the 52nd (Lowland) Division—to support the 53rd, the result would have been different, but the difficulty of supplying water for men and horses would have been immense and impossible to realize by those who were not on the spot."

As it was, Sir Philip Chetwode, after consultation with Sir Charles Dobell, withdrew his mounted troops during the night in order to prevent their envelopment by the enemy; and, since this retirement made the position won by the 53rd Division no longer tenable, the infantry was ordered to draw back as well. Some of the men who had fought their way into the town were cut off and captured, and at dawn on the following day two of our light armoured batteries found themselves in the middle of a large body of Turks, but brilliantly extricated themselves, causing heavy casualties to the enemy.

Upon our withdrawal the Turks poured reinforcements into Gaza without hindrance, and next morning turned back the outposts of the 53rd Division, which had been sent up at daybreak to reoccupy Ali Muntar. Flushed with success, the Turks made several attempts to hurl our force back from our new main positions, but their efforts were prevented by the firm stand made by our infantry and the accurate shooting of our artillery.

"Nevertheless," records Sir Archibald Murray, "though tired and ill-supplied with water, the 53rd and 54th Divisions, now placed under the command of the General Officer Commanding 53rd Division, remained throughout the day staunch and cheerful, and perfectly capable of repulsing with heavy losses to the enemy any Turkish counter-attacks. At no point was any enemy attack successful, and the Imperial Camel Corps, on the right of the 54th Division, in repulsing the attack by the 3rd Turkish Cavalry Division, practically annihilated the attackers."

It was an impossible position for permanent occupation, however—devoid of water and exposed to attack and artillery-fire from three directions. Since it was also impossible for General Dobell immediately to reorganize his force for a "deliberate attack", with his three infantry divisions and two cavalry divisions—though had such an attack been possible, General Murray had "no doubt that Gaza could have been taken and the Turks forced to retire"—the only alternative was to withdraw the whole force. By daylight, therefore, on the following morning the infantry had reached the western side of the Wadi Ghuzze and taken up a strong defen-

sive position covering Deir El Belah. Our cavalry throughout the day remained in touch with the enemy, who contented himself meantime with occupying and strengthening the Gaza defences.

Summing up the First Battle of Gaza, the Commander-in-Chief states that the results were "that my primary and secondary objects were completely attained, but that the failure to attain the third object—the capture of Gaza—owing to the delay caused by the fog on the 26th and the waterless nature of the country round Gaza, prevented a most successful operation from being a complete disaster to the enemy". All the troops engaged, he adds, "especially the 53rd Division and the brigade of the 54th, fought with the utmost gallantry and endurance, showing to the full the splendid fighting qualities which they possess". The battle gave us 950 Turkish and German prisoners and two Austrian field-guns, and cost the enemy losses estimated by General Murray at 8000—just twice the number of our own casualties.

If Gaza was too formidable to capture by a *coup de main* in March, it was hardly likely to fall after it had been transformed into a strong modern fortress, practically impregnable against such forces as General Murray had under his command. When the second battle was fought, three weeks later (April 17, 1917), the enemy, who had rushed up reinforcements unchecked, was fully prepared for the attack, having five divisions of infantry and two cavalry divisions—against our three divisions of infantry and two of

cavalry¹—together with a considerable increase in heavy artillery and a defensive position which daily increased in strength.

Our preparations for the new tussle were begun as soon as possible, but Sir Archibald Murray instructed General Dobell that on no consideration was a premature attack to be made. General Dobell now had his head-quarters at Deir el Belah, where the railway station of the new line was opened on April 5. Fresh arrangements were made for supplying sufficient water for at least two divisions of troops in the Wadi Ghuzze, and the plan decided on was that the new advance should take place in two stages. The first stage was to involve the occupation of the Sheikh Abbas-Mansura Ridge, south of Gaza, and its preparation as a strong point from which any flank attack could easily be repelled. A short period of development was to follow, during which water-supply and communications were to be improved as far as possible, heavy artillery and tanks brought up, and supplies advanced, so that the final stage—an advance on Gaza after a heavy bombardment—should be accomplished rapidly.

Some tanks, it should be added, had been added to Sir Archibald Murray's reinforcements, and proved formidable additions to our strength, inflicting heavy casualties on the enemy during the battle. They offered, however, conspicuous marks to the Austrian and German gunners, who

¹ Sir Archibald Murray's force had also been increased by one infantry division (the 74th, which was held in reserve in the Second Battle of Gaza.

made excellent practice throughout the day, and several of the tanks were burnt out or otherwise put out of action. Besides the tanks and the 74th Division of infantry, Sir Archibald Murray had received some more heavy artillery. In addition to this he arranged for the co-operation of two British monitors (Nos. 21 and 31), as well as the French battleship *Requin*, now lying off the coast in readiness to shell the Turkish positions with their long-range guns.

The Turks themselves, however, with their elaborate system of entrenchments and strong points stretching south-east from Gaza for some 12,000 yards to Atawineh Ridge, and their chain of detached outposts covering the remaining 7 miles to Tel El Sheira, on the Central Palestine Railway, were as securely placed as in the Sanni-i-Yat position on the Tigris, which the Kut relief force had thrice attempted in vain to force in the previous year.

General Murray, who had established his Advanced General Headquarters at Khan Yunus, realized that the length and strength of the enemy's position put any encircling movement by our cavalry out of the question, unless the enemy's line in front could be forced, and a passage made through which our mounted divisions could be pushed. Until that could be done, the rôle of our cavalry was to protect the right flank of the infantry, whose attack in the final stage was roughly to follow the lines of the first attack.

A labyrinth of trenches along the ridge from Ali Muntar now guarded Gaza itself from all attacks from the

south-west, south, and south-east. These positions, in addition to the natural obstacles formed by thick cactus hedges, had been well wired, highly fortified, and turned into nests of machine-guns manned by Germans. Away on the enemy's left, at Beersheba, were Turkish cavalry in a crescent-shaped line, ready either to make a flank attack or to assist in the defence of Samson's city. Between Gaza and the sea, the right of the enemy's lines ran in the arc of a circle west and south-west of the town. "This section", wrote General Murray, "consisted of a double line of trenches and redoubts, strongly held by infantry and machine-guns well placed and concealed in impenetrable cactus hedges, built on high mud banks enclosing orchards and gardens on the outskirts of the town."

Small wonder that the three British infantry divisions, though they attacked with the most splendid courage and devotion, were not strong enough completely to master such powerfully defended positions. The first stage of the operations on April 17—the advance of the infantry at dawn—was, however, brilliantly successful, the Sheikh Abbas-Mansura line being carried by 7.30 with practically no casualties. The consolidation of the new line, and the preparations for the next and decisive stage of the operations, were at once begun under intermittent shelling, our cavalry in the meantime fulfilling its duty of protection and reconnaissance. For the next two days the whole terrain was covered with supply columns pushed up to the forward positions, so that when the

wind died down an enormous pall of dust hung over the whole area.

The decisive stage of the battle began on the 19th with the bombardment at 5.30 a.m. of the outer trenches of Gaza, in which the French and British naval guns played a telling part.

"As the sun lifted over the black hills of Judea," wrote Mr. Massey at the time, "from sea and land shells of all calibres up to 11 inches tore slits in the elaborate defences, throwing up masses of earth and wire, and making Ali Muntar quake. Some trees on that hill were entirely denuded of their leaves, but the most prominent tree of all seemed to bend before the shell-storm and retain most of its clothing. It remains the most conspicuous landmark of that historic spot. On the sand-dunes pillars of sand were raised, framed with the white and black smoke of the explosives, a wonderful foil to the glittering golden ridges."

The attack by the Desert Column also began at dawn. By 10.30 a.m. the Australian and New Zealand Mounted Division had spread far away to the east, while the Imperial Mounted Division was delivering a dismounted attack with the greatest gallantry on the Atawineh trenches under fierce machine-gun and shell-fire. A battery of the Honourable Artillery Company greatly distinguished itself in this attack. Though little headway was made, and the operations in this direction abandoned later in the afternoon, the work of the Desert Column as a whole—intended, in effect, only as a "containing attack"—met, in Sir Archibald Murray's words, "with all the success which had been anticipated",

checking and thrusting back a serious enemy counter-attack.

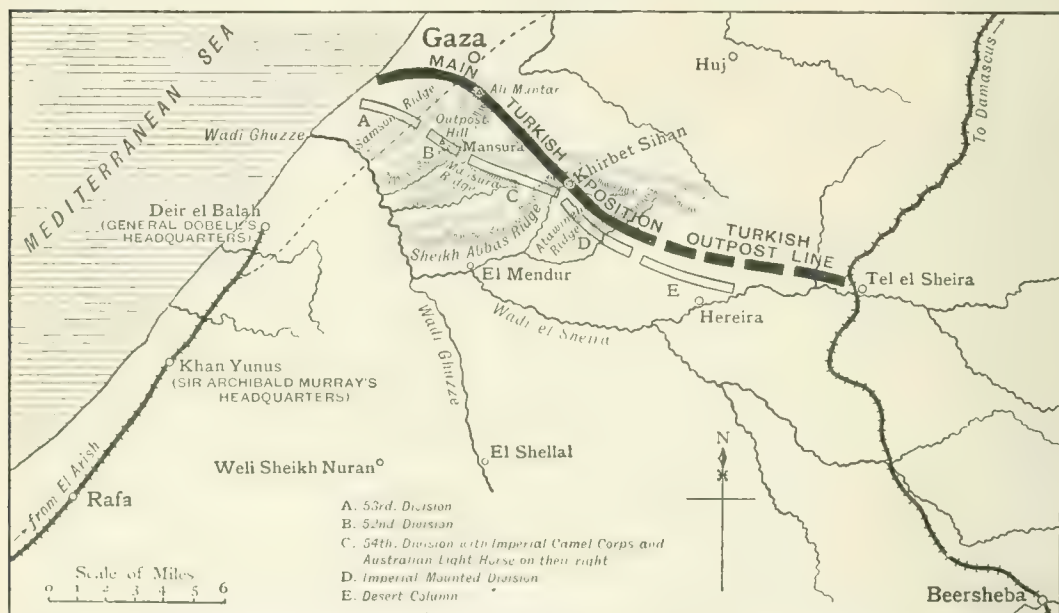
In the main operations the infantry were launched to the attack at 7.15 a.m., when the 53rd Division fought its way up Samson Ridge and attained its first objective, finding the trenches there full of Turkish dead. Towards Ali Muntar and south of Gaza, attacked a quarter of an hour later by the 52nd and 54th Divisions, with the Imperial Camel Corps attached, progress was more difficult. On the extreme left flank the brigade of the 52nd (Lowlanders) forged ahead with magnificent determination, ultimately advancing some 2000 yards towards the enemy's defences on the Ali Muntar Ridge, only to be checked there by desperately heavy machine-gun fire from a strong Turkish position known as Outpost Hill. This check prevented any advance of the next brigade, which was echeloned slightly in its right rear. Later, one of the tanks, advancing astride the lunette on Outpost Hill, and inflicting heavy casualties on the garrison, cleared the way for the capture of this bastion by the infantry.

Meanwhile the 54th Division, under General Hare—to whom the Commander-in-Chief paid a warm tribute for his successful leadership throughout—was advancing, with the Imperial Camel Corps, on the left of the 52nd Division. He was now, however, ahead of the rear brigades of the 52nd, and had his left exposed thereby to a heavy enfilade fire from the direction of Ali Muntar. Quick to seize their opportunity, the Turks delivered a powerful counter attack on the left

brigade thus exposed, but were repulsed by our machine-gun fire. On the right another brigade fought its way forward against the enemy's defence-works between Gaza and Khirbet Sihan, at which latter place the Imperial Camel Corps, in conjunction with the Australian Light Horse, had stormed the Turkish trenches at 9 a.m.

a few men for the purpose". Beyond this point, however, the brigade on Outpost Hill was unable to advance, every attempt of the kind being shattered by fire at its inception, while the rear brigade was forced to remain under a heavy fire in the open.

"The nests of machine-guns in the broken ground", explains General Murray, "could



The Second Battle of Gaza: map showing approximately the main Turkish positions and the lines reached by the British troops on April 17, 1917

That in brief was the limit of the advance in the main attack, and our infantry and cavalry were soon hard put to it to hold what they had already won. At one critical moment the left brigade of the Lowlanders was shelled from its dearly-won foothold on Outpost Hill; "but the position", records General Murray, "was most gallantly retaken on his own initiative by Major W. T. Forrest, M.C., King's Own Scottish Borderers (subsequently killed), who collected

not be located among the narrow dongas, holes, and fissures with which this locality was seamed. Partly owing to this, and partly owing to the extent of the area, the artillery-fire concentrated upon it was unable to keep down the enemy's fire when the brigade on Outpost Hill attempted to advance. . . . It is possible that if the General Officer Commanding, Eastern Force, had now decided to throw in his reserves, the key of the position might have been taken with the further loss of between 5000 and 6000 men, but this would have left my small force, already reduced, with a difficult line of front to hold against increasing

reinforcements of the enemy, who, owing to the conformation of the terrain, could attack from several directions."

As it was, General Dobell, seeing that our attack had not succeeded in drawing in the enemy's reserves, decided that the moment had not yet arrived for an attempt to force a decision by throwing in the general reserve, and the battle dragged on until 6.20 p.m., when the brigade on Outpost Hill were again and finally forced back.

Already, at 4 p.m., General Murray had issued orders that all ground gained during the day must be held through the night, with a view to resuming the attack on the Ali Muntar position at dawn the next day under cover of a concentrated artillery bombardment. Our total casualties by this time had amounted to some 7000, and during the night General Dobell sent word to the Commander-in-Chief saying that, after careful deliberation and consultation with all his divisional commanders, "he was strongly of the opinion that the resumption of the attack ordered for the following morning did not offer sufficient prospect of success to justify the very heavy casualties which such an operation would, in his opinion, involve."

On these grounds General Murray's sanction was "urgently requested" for the issue of fresh instructions for the consolidation on the following day of the positions already gained in preparation for a further attack on the enemy's line at some point between Gaza and Hereira, "as and when an opportunity might offer". In view

of this strongly expressed opinion, the Commander-in-Chief assented to the proposal, and November 20 was accordingly spent in consolidating the captured ground, the enemy, contrary to expectation, meantime making no attempt at a general counter-attack to win it back. There were several small local assaults on his part during



General Sir Archibald Murray
(from a photograph by Swaine)

the day, but all these were easily repulsed.

On the following day (November 21) General Dobell went to Khan Yunus to discuss the situation with General Murray, expressing his opinion, confirmed by that of all his subordinate commanders, that in view of the great strength of the enemy's positions there was little hope of carrying them with the British forces then available. The only sound policy,

in his opinion, was the adoption of more deliberate methods—even trench warfare if necessary—pending the arrival of reinforcements. To this change of policy the Commander-in-Chief, “not without considerable reluctance”, finally agreed.

“In the meanwhile”, writes General Murray, “it became apparent to me that General Dobell, who had suffered some weeks previously from a severe touch of the sun, was no longer in a fit state to bear further operations in the coming heat of summer. To my great regret, therefore, I felt it my duty to relieve him of his command. Accordingly, on the morning of the 21st, I interviewed General Dobell and informed him of my decision, in which he concurred.”

Sir Philip Chetwode was appointed to command the Eastern Force in General Dobell's stead, and was himself succeeded as leader of the Desert Column by Major-General Chauvel, the command of the Australian and New Zealand Mounted Division falling to Major-General E. W. T. Chaytor, who had proved his mettle on many occasions while leading the mounted New Zealanders.

Though the facts were suppressed by the Government for many months the double set-back at Gaza was the more disappointing as it checked some of the high hopes raised by Sir Stanley Maude's brilliant victory at Bagdad only a few short weeks before. Beaten in Mesopotamia, the Turks were now determined to hold on to Gaza at all

costs in order to recover as much as possible of their vanishing prestige, especially in view of the revolt of the Arabs of the Hedjaz, which was to prove an invaluable factor in our later and decisive campaign under General Allenby.

For the next six months the general situation round Gaza remained unchanged. By midsummer of 1917, however, the time was coming for a new move. The Bolshevik betrayal was changing the whole complexion of the Allies' military situation from East to West, and the War Office and British Government were forced to make up their minds about their policy in Palestine and plan a campaign there on a proper footing. No longer able to count on Russian co-operation, our Mesopotamian operations were threatened with unanticipated dangers and difficulties, chief among them being the enemy's plans for another counter-offensive in Mesopotamia. For these and other reasons a serious advance on the Palestine front was now projected for the following autumn, and a new Commander-in-Chief, General Sir Edmund Allenby—fresh from commanding the Third Army in the Battle of Arras—sent out in place of Sir Archibald Murray.¹ The change in the Palestine command took place on June 28, ten weeks after the removal of Sir Charles Dobell.

F. A. M.

¹ General Murray was shortly afterwards appointed to the Alderney command.

PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE
CARDS OR SLIPS FROM THIS POCKET

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO LIBRARY

BRIEF
D
0055514
V.7

UTL AT DOWNSVIEW



D RANGE BAY SHLF POS ITEM C
39 09 09 19 09 020 5